

SHOE THE WILD MARE

the colt,
Shoe the colt,
Shoe the wild mare,
Here a nail,
There a nail —
Yet she goes bare.

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OTHER BOOKS BY
MR. FOWLER

TRUMPET IN THE DUST

THE LOVING GURU

(In Preparation)

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SHOE
THE WILD MARE



BY *Gene Fowler*



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HORACE LIVERIGHT



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TO
STANLEY WASHBURN
AND
JOE LAURIE, JR.

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PART ONE

Chapter One

OF a January Sunday the wolf whine of winter persists beneath the high stone cornices of downtown Manhattan. The derelict wind rides in from Ambrose Channel and the two bays. The famished wind gnaws without ceasing at towers that uphold a sky as gray as the wood of old gallows beams.

The lanes of the financial district are coldly empty of life. Frosted dust from yesterday's heels stirs beneath the lash of the half gale. A disemboweled newspaper careens along the forsaken street; a gift from Broadway to Wall.

Lamenting wind and loneliness and Sunday in Wall Street. Solitude, hollow and haunting. Great bronze doors, as tightly sealed as the lids of coffins; and windows as blank as the eye-sockets of blind grandfathers. Cupolas pressing their corroded, green-blue surfaces against the sky of gallows-gray.

The holy day comes to Wall Street like an exile returning to the environs of his youth; finding his boyhood's scene stricken with pestilential silence, mysterious, sullen. Sunday, the pilgrim, stalks along an avenue of sphinxes; gropes among deserted altars on which the fires have died

after six days of sacrifice to the Great God Get. Sunday, the wanderer, looks this way and that, as though searching for his six seductive sisters, the courtesans who have danced away. Six courtesans—the first of whom is named Monday—will dance hither again, once they are assured that their pious brother has departed. Fresh fires will be kindled and the hymn will rise anew. And the prayer—Give us this day our daily greed.

There is a metallic belaboring against Wall Street's head, pillowed on an avenue called Broadway. That avenue is a varicose vein coursing up the leg of old Father Knickerbocker. Trinity's bells are baptizing the head of Wall Street, slumber-locked publican.

Solemn, prideful bells. Self-confident bells of noisy piety, vibrating in your ears, in your nose, stuffing the frontal sinus with messages of Lead Kindly Light and Nearer My God to Thee.

But not much nearer.

The bells molt their sound, shedding brass pollen on graves where long-dead somebodies of the town fraternize with expensive earth; the ashes of the dead shaken from above by the bells; from below by the subway's ague.... The January bells signal to Jehovah of the Jews that all is well in this Christian brotherhood.... A conservative flurry of snow is flung from Heaven in acknowledgment of the message.

Two drab pigeons perch against the nudes of the Stock Exchange frieze. They ruff their feathers and bill each other significantly—on this lonely Sunday the overtures of the pigeons comprise the only business transaction

involving America's Basilica of the Bleeding Throat....

Of a January Sunday the financial district of New York of the Philistines is as deserted as the forgotten aisles of Ur of the Chaldees.

ADAM BROOK, sitting at his wide and almost bare teakwood desk, was in a confusional state, bordering on a psychological deadlock. He sat in offices that occupied the entire fortieth floor of the Brook Utilities Building in Pine Street. He was contemplating a wineglass that contained a whitish poison in solution. There was a tight feeling beneath his breastbone, as though his heart had been rinsed in vinegar.

Adam Brook was just past his fortieth year—a period in the life of a self-made American when disappointment in love cannot be met with the sex-sureness of a man of thirty, nor with the autumnal calm that governs the loins of a man in his fifties. It is conceivable that forty finds a man of biological restraint somewhat uncertain as to what relative values to bestow on intimacies that have been the fountainhead of poems and the cause of wars.

In the case of an intense, driving personality, such as Adam Brook, a man is apt one day to sit and take stock. It may occur to him that while business bent, life itself has hurried past. Then there may come unrest, revolt. Hitherto as safe as moonlight in a bedroom, he faces a temptation to plunge into the stream. The Goddess of Fortune is deposed. The Goddess of Love is exalted, with a devastating morbidity that the world of scandal well knows.

Women who speak concerning their labors among

delayed playboys say it is a ghastly thing to encounter blubbering insufficiency in patrons who cut dominant figures on speakers' rostra or at the tables of boards of directors. If it be any consolation to the poor ones who set prosperity above potency, let it be put down for a fact that a baron of the Street—he could summon a panic with a nod of his Neronic brow—spent maudlin hours on the bosom of his bored lady, bemoaning his potato nose.... Come, my poor brothers who are about to die, let us be gay.

It is altogether unthinkable that this middle-aged, undersized, though defiantly erect industrialist, Adam Brook, chose to mix for himself that wineglass of whitish poison. It was not in keeping with his ways or belief in his star that he destroy himself by sipping a substance that breaks down red corpuscles, stopping the heart in a matter of seconds. Even a leaden Sunday, with dirgeful bells laboring in Trinity's old clock-tower, would not depress an Adam Brook, persuading him to exercise a proxy on behalf of the Grim Reaper.

He didn't look that sort of man; nor was he that breed.

Brook may have believed for the moment that he intended to kill himself. Despite the habitual orderliness of his business mind, the shrewd incisiveness of his brain processes in commercial life, he suffered frequent meanderings when dealing with life itself. From remote corners of his brain and during moments of introspection, thousands of bubbles rose like globules of gas in a seltzer siphon. The bubbles burst, bombarding his skull till the roots of his thin, brown hair itched. On such oc-

casions it seemed that his ego bestrode his brain, dashing off at a gallop, leaving behind an empty cranium, a body that was insured for \$2,000,000 and a name, Adam Brook.

Whenever this loose-pulley condition occurred, either from a blow dealt to his vanity or from too much wondering, Adam Brook was likely to move in bizarre fashion. To recapture his truant ego, he made some rousing gesture. Always, however, he acted with an appearance of deliberation. He had concocted the poison deliberately—too deliberately for one who seeks speedy dissolution and escape. This deliberation, even while he sought to re-make logs from the sawdust of his dreams, was a notable part of him. True, he had occasional bursts of temper, but on the whole he was methodically persistent, tenacious, ritualistic. Even in matters of domestic love; with preparations timed nicely and carried out with the mannerisms of landlord and tenant. Then the perfunctory aftermaths.... "Good night, my dear. It was so good of you. Shall I expect you for a ride in the park in the morning?"

It was certain that Brook's suicidal essay was a gesture and nothing less. He had left a note in his pent-house atop *Brook Towers* in Park Avenue. It had been an effort to write it. He missed the luxury of dictating to one of his battery of stenographers, and absent-mindedly looked about his drawing room for a dictograph. While penning the note he realized that his public relations counsel, Mr. Noble J. Nimms, was a help, after all, in the composition of speeches, pamphlets and statements to the press. Then he thought of his young wife, Enid, the cause of all his

troubles, and began to write. He revealed how he was going to squeeze the beats from his heart; how Enid might instruct Godchaux, the butler, to call the Medical Examiner; how the body could be found in the offices where Brook had gained the journalistic title, "The Little Napoleon of Pine Street."

He sat there and heard the morning bells. He sat there and saw the zinc-bowl of the sky from high windows that overlooked the harbor. He sighed through the murky hours, but there was no ring at his private telephone. Enid Brook failed to call or to come to him. She was familiar with his gestures and she no longer cared. Had she ever cared?

He put one hand on a paperweight, made in the form of an apple and painted to resemble one closely. The apple was an iron one. It was a talisman, and whenever Brook grasped it, as he did now, it sent a thrill of strength up his slender right arm.

Still grasping the apple, which at first felt eerily cold in his palm, Adam Brook raised his eyes to a plaster replica of Napoleon's death mask. The mask hung to his right on a blue-velveted wall. He leaned back and wondered why such a rich and powerful man as himself, The Little Napoleon of Pine Street, should be hissed in the bedroom. Then his ego, astride his brain, rode back into his skull and the bubbles ceased bouncing against his cranial bones. The itching left the roots of his thin brown hair. He went to one of the windows, the wineglass of whitish poison in his hand, raised the sash and watched the wind catch the fluid and bear it off in spray.

The tongues of the bells wobbled in a pious finale. Then there was silence, broken only by the throating of a distant tug and by the wind wailing like an old washer-woman who chants her widowhood to a clothes-board.

Chapter Two

[*DAM BROOK* was some weeks past forty, yet he posed thirty-nine. He had sliced a year from his span when he reached the thirty-mark. The passage of decades held an indefinable menace. The lopping off of even one year was a gesture against Time, the Life-eater. In this matter as in others equally trivial, Brook practised deceptions that appeared silly and grotesque. At length his little mental postures grew to a myth that seemed plausible and real to Adam Brook.

The countless pretensions, now a legend, gave background to frequent newspaper and magazine articles that proclaimed Brook The Little Napoleon of Pine Street.... Napoleon! How he exulted in the thought that he, Brook, had succeeded through some sort of metempsychosis, to the soul, the spirit, even the destiny of the immortal Corsican. Would there be a Waterloo? A St. Helena? Drops of sweat as large as tadpoles came to his high forehead. Get thee behind me, Death!

Brook was an assiduous collector of Napoleoniana. The death mask of the Man of Destiny, hanging on the blue-velveted office wall and on a level with Brook's face

when he stood, was intrinsically the least valuable of the collection. Yet it was symbolically potent. Brook was a trafficker in symbols.

The iron apple that he so often palmed was one of his symbols. Sometimes he carried it to the long directors' table which fronted the dais on which stood his throne-like chair and teakwood desk. Brook wished the paper-weight were a Napoleonic relic, but he was unable to conjure such a pedigree. For himself and his own life he could muster spontaneous fictions, but the things he owned had to be authenticated. He imagined the iron apple was in some way emblematic of Napoleon; perhaps, after all, it had been a Prussian ball from the field near Jena and had come in disguise to battle Brook's Napoleonic mementoes.

He liked to feel the apple's cool, smooth contour, letting his finger tips caress the dimple that held a metal nubbin for a stem. Sometimes he thought of the golden apple of Paris. That made him think of love and he would blink his big black eyes. What was this love that drove men mad? Napoleon couldn't fathom it, either. Napoleon saw others flinging love's golden apples, bushels of them, while he himself had only an iron apple to give. Still, the iron one was easily discerned among bushels of golden ones. Well, he, Brook, had an iron apple, and he *was* iron. ...If only one could keep the rust away from that iron.

He sat in a chair that once graced a salon at Fontainebleau and studied the death mask times without number. It had been coated with shellac to give it the similitude of mortality. Such contemplation preserved Brook's singleness

of purpose, which was to conquer. He fondled his iron apple.... If only the Corsican had perfected a formula for the domination of women who whined: "Don't touch me. I have a headache."

Beneath the death mask was an antique cabinet, originally the Emperor's commode at Elba. It was fitted with cunningly contrived trays in which were certain relics of Bonaparte. Among these was a locket with crystal lenses, and between the lenses, an authenticated lock of Napoleon's chestnut hair. The wisp of hair was curled in a question mark.

Brook fancied his own hair, thinning at the parietals, was identical in its brownish tint and rather fine texture with the question-mark lock that lay imprisoned in crystal.

The principal object in the cabinet, from the standpoint of analysis of The Little Napoleon of Pine Street, was a canvas-bound volume of folio size, backed by boards over which fabric was stretched. The fabric had been part of *The Northumberland's* mainsail. What bitter winds had belled that canvas, driving the fallen demiurge over the seas to an exile on rocky St. Helena!

Brook turned the pages of this book often and expertly. It was his own especially compiled chronology of Napoleon's life. There was no other book identical with this. He had it prepared by Monsieur Lacroix, assistant curator of the Louvre and an acknowledged authority on Napoleon. Brook had its type set, the plates made, the book printed on parchment—this single volume—and the plates destroyed.

Unlike other tables that began with the birth of Bona-

parte, August 15, 1769, Brook's unique work commenced with the carefully estimated day of Letizia Ramolini's pregnancy. This day—most painstakingly approximated by Monsieur Lacroix and a professor of gynecology—was set down with scholarly dignity as November 9, 1768. Brook urged the assistant curator to calculate the very hour of conception, but Monsieur Lacroix declined, intimating he already had strained the limits of academic procedure. After Brook had taken his disappointment to his suite at the *Hotel Regina*, Monsieur Lacroix confided in the consulting gynecologist:

"America must be the maddest sort of place."

Brook inferred to his associates that he was not superstitious, even though he had walked under a ladder the day of the Wall Street explosion. But when his memory or his chronology recalled a day that was ill-starred in the life of the Emperor, he acted with almost painful circumspection on such an anniversary. Was it merely a coincidence that Brook Utilities, Incorporated, lost a huge income tax claim on the anniversary of the commencement of the Russian retreat?

The bulk of Brook's Napoleonic relics, to be sure, were not on display. He was secretly thrilled when he read that his was the finest private collection of Napoleonic campaign hats, medals, letters and sabres this side of the Atlantic. Yet he kept his treasures hidden for himself, in the manner of a gentleman, who owns more banks than he does teeth, sequestering his mistresses. Then, too, there was a probability that the world would laugh if it were revealed how he went to extremes with his Napoleonic fixation.

Only his most trusted lieutenants—and they were few—were aware that a sacrosanct room adjoining his office was furnished with soldier-like simplicity; that it was sound proof; that it had a single iron bed on which Brook lay at times to daydream while his directors waited for him to take command of the meetings. The bed was vouched to have been one of two entrusted to Marchand in Bonaparte's will for conveyance to the Emperor's son.

As Adam Brook lay on the iron bed and gazed at spy-glasses, campaign hats, sabres, war maps, a green tunic and a crucifix from the chapel of the Brienne school, he experienced diaphragmatic vibrations that might have led another man to believe himself psychic. He rose from such periods of abstraction, went to the head of the directors' table and plunged into action. His ability to quote figures, recall details and make estimates without referring to notes astounded his confrères. His black eyes sparkled as he played at asking for advice and then proceeded to shoot the advice full of holes.

His associates were bound to him by a strange sort of loyalty, whose dam was admiration but whose sire was fear. He seemed to see through everything, and yet he permitted intrigues in his organization and pitted one rival against another. These scheming yes-men engendered such hatreds as usually are identified with workers in houses of prostitution.

Unafraid as The Little Napoleon of Pine Street had proved himself in tournaments of the money market, he shrank from one assailant above all others—Ridicule. Of small stature, sparsely built though not delicate, he had

courage. Yet the possibility of the world grinning at him made him cringe. Just as some strong men have a fear of lightning, drawing the blinds and crawling beneath bed clothes, Adam Brook had a fear of laughter. This one fear cloaked several other fears, foremost among them the likelihood of being judged inconsequential in the love sense. He never could quite blot out the mirthless laughter of Enid on the first honeymoon night aboard a Michigan Senator's yacht. Its hysterical, hissing quality had seemed an accusation.

Well, he had been so concentrated on business during the years that he couldn't be expected to know all that the Orientals did concerning such matters.

Chapter Three

ALTHOUGH many leaders of American industry are eager to describe how they have risen from untoward environments, Adam Brook was equally anxious in concealing his own source of being and becoming. This may be regarded by psychologists as perverse almost, in a land where this meat packer boasts that his father used to push a wheel-barrow in a slaughter house, and that tin-plate king confides that his grandpap peddled soldered pots along Indian-infested frontiers.

A man who falsifies the year of his birth also may be capable of shifting the scene of that event. Adam Brook made such an amendment. Whereas he actually was born in Des Moines, Iowa, he elected to honor Boston as the city of his nativity. It seemed the cultural thing to do. So fixed became his illusion regarding Boston as the place of his physical début that he contributed handsomely to the symphony group of that refined metropolis and otherwise lent well-publicized support to the arts.

As the Brobdingnagian fiction mounted from the Lilliputian lie, it became expedient for Brook to account for his lack of New England idiom and Bostonese diction. He

disclosed that his late father ordered him to the farm lands of the Middle West after a series of quarrels, during which the young Brook refused to prepare for matriculation at the Sorbonne. He had insisted on entering Harvard.

"My father," he said, "offered to compromise on Oxford; but I stood out for Harvard."

He felt it mandatory to manufacture this explanation, after a desperate effort to smother his "r's" in the Back Bay manner. He was chagrined at his inability to approximate the vocals of a commonwealth that will be remembered in history for its timely discovery that Voltaire was a smutty writer. In trying to stifle his "r's," Brook emitted noises not unlike the throatings of a bull-frog in the mating season.

With birth-date and birthplace effectively fabricated, Adam Brook thought it proper to invest himself with ancestors of suitable stature.

"I come by my taste for art and music naturally," he said. "I don't know where on earth I get my business flair, unless it comes from my maternal grandfather, a silk maker of Rheims."

In a memorable interview (one which he hoped would pave the way for a degree at Harvard) Brook narrated that his mother was a star of the French stage and forty-odd years ago the toast of Paris.

"She is still living," the interview quoted him. "And she is as pretty as ever. My father was an artist. He died at sea." He wondered if he should claim that his father sank with the *Titanic* while offering assistance to some children. "My father did landscapes mostly, during his

student days in Paris. But after he met my mother he turned to portraiture, so greatly did her beauty sway him."

Many times he repeated this speech. It seldom varied, once Brook had planted it firmly in his routine. And after the speech a sigh, as deeply drawn as the first boiling murmur of a steam-kettle. And after the sigh a Napoleonic attitude that was perfected before mirrors; a hand tucked in the waistcoat—almost a womanly hand were it not for flat-lying hairs above the knuckles—and very black eyes peering from under heavy brown brows, gazing at the everything of nothing.

Certain inquisitive persons were unable to find an Adam Brook, sr., listed among painters of the late nineteenth century. But the sigh of Adam Brook, jr., was eloquent; the Napoleonic stance formidable. He displayed four landscapes (they were painted by a carefully commissioned Italian) signed with a sprawling "A. Brook." There was a portrait, too, hanging on the wall of his office. It depicted a slender, vibrant woman in the garb of Portia.

Brook pointed to the picture while newspaper men lifted their chins. "My mother." Did his father paint this unsigned portrait? "Yes. It was one of forty-six that he did of Mother. It was an obsession with him. Always he sought to get what he called 'the perfect mood.' It is unsigned as you see. Another quirk of Father's. I can hear him as though it were yesterday: 'No man's name is worthy of appearing with that heavenly creature.' Only once did he sign a portrait of her, his masterpiece. It perished with him at sea. And then, gentlemen, where do you think he signed

his name?" His voice dropped impressively. "He signed it on the hem of her garment."

Still, with all his hoaxes ably buttressed, Brook was aware that sceptics were making further inquiries into his parentage. They were busybodies with quivering nostrils and cocked ears; men and women who always itch to prick any prominent man's toy balloon. They gloat with a sort of sexual gratification when they hear that a nation's chief had an illegitimate daughter; that the head of an anti-medico cult was a secret pill swallower; that the chairman of a great corporation presented a mulatto actress with a Park Avenue apartment house, buying it for her when she had been barred from renting a suite. The gardens of the successful ones are wet, not with dew, but with the mouth-droolings of Peeping Toms.

Symptoms of doubt rising now and again on the Brook horizon led him to invent his masterpiece of personal fiction. He found a mother.

The facts attendant on Brook's relationship with Madame Yvonne Elise must be chronicled as a matter of record, no matter how unbelievable they may seem. One should not deny the idiosyncrasies of rich Americans when it is history that a certain Senator built a palace on Fifth Avenue and played Indian on the grand staircase, imagining himself to be Sitting Bull and making the deplorable mistake of thinking that God was General Custer; that an esteemed oil baron, once vilified but now resting in the odor of sanctity and good works, chooses dinner-hour to toss oyster crackers and catch them with his mouth; that a late steel master fished day after day in his

private lake, pulling in a dead bass that a servant put on the hook; that a mighty motor car magnate sent a ship—let us say no more, my countrymen.... The play instinct and fungi grow in peculiar places.

Miss Ellen Gage, Brook's confidential secretary, searched long and secretly for the candidate for motherhood. She found in Chicago a wispy, gray woman of the French Theater. After as much inquiry as was in keeping with the retired actress's temperament, Miss Gage reported to Brook. She said that Madame Yvonne Elise was a really charming creature. Of course there were printed—at least three decades back—canards having to do with the Madame's friendship with Romain, the sculptor, and her gift of ten historic fans to Anatole France. This gave Brook some concern, but he yielded to the exigencies of the moment. He concluded that Madame Yvonne probably had done nothing more than pose for the sculptor and little else than receive an autograph from the author.

Panting with anticipation, Brook ordered his private car, *Straybrook*, to be readied for the road. He took with him only his intimates, Miss Gage and his chief of counsel, Judge Jonathan Webb. They embarked for Chicago and Brook thought up nicknames of endearment. He wondered if Madame Yvonne would stand for "Muzzy." By the time they reached Albany, he decided to call her "Mumsie." He put the problem before Judge Webb, who suggested that his client let time and observation settle it. Judge Webb then went to the lavatory and took a rousing drink of *Overholt* whiskey.

Judge Webb was in his sixties. He had a bachelor look

and chewed mints to disguise moderate whiskey toping. He seldom spoke, believing that silence was a celibacy of the mind, but when he did speak one felt that he was being well paid for his words and that he was worth his fee. In talking, his upper false teeth moved up and down like a portcullis of ivory. It was believed that Judge Webb stood in awe of only three institutions: himself, the Supreme Court of the United States and Adam Brook—in the order named. Still, with all his regard for his client, he found the whiskey easier to swallow than such recurring whimsies as "Mumsie."

Brook found Madame Yvonne living in straitened retirement. She spoke excellent English, with just a flutter of accent. She told Brook she had attended school in England during her early girlhood.

"The Princess of Wales once gave me a blue ribbon at a fête," she said.

As the small, calm-mannered woman spoke, Brook felt positive that Romain progressed no further than a kiss and that M. France had done no more than stoop above her tiny, tapering hand. Surely it was an infamous lie, that story charging her with scratching the cheeks of Bernhardt at Monte Carlo in 1886.

At first Madame Yvonne was dreadfully puzzled. But she managed to resurrect her commercial sense and decided to burn numerous candles if what Brook told her proved true. There was a rehearsal between son and mother. Brook found that she fitted his scheme exactly. She was his mother. He was her son. A second-hand French Bible was

procured (an immense task in Chicago) and names were entered and dates set down.

Brook decided to move his synthetic mother to St. Louis. It was large enough to be lost in and sufficiently distant from New York for evasion of tricky reporters. Brook objected to Chicago because...well, something terrible to think upon had happened his real mother there.

Brook had to return to New York to close an oil deal. He left Judge Webb and Miss Gage to arrange details; the moving to St. Louis; the establishment of a more than comfortable home, with high garden walls and other guarantees of privacy. Then, after Brook's name began to appear more and more often in "success" stories, and when he announced the identity of his widowed mother, reporters were able to confirm his claims. Occasional bits of intimate news concerning Madame Yvonne Brook came from St. Louis, thanks to Noble J. Nimms, handy public relations counsel and investigator for Brook Utilities, Inc. All such news redounded to Brook's credit as a man of filial worth. Pictures of Madame Brook, not very recent ones on account of possible recognition in Chicago, were given the press. With this corroboration, the bulk of the Brook saga was accepted by the public with the same readiness that decent church-folk used to embrace that story of manna falling from the sky.

Brook's devotion to his mother was a recurrent topic in public prints. It was touched on frequently by prominent clergymen, whose churches had been given rose-windows as memorials to the sunken Adam Brook, sr. Everything about this dutiful son was fodder for the pulpit

feed-box: his sending of flowers to his mother on birthday anniversaries; his telephone messages over long distance wires each evening promptly at 9 o'clock, no matter where Brook might be or how important his other engagements; how Madame Brook knelt in prayer after speaking to her son, pouring out her thanks to God for such a loving boy and asking God to guide Adam. Of course the ministers did not know and would have been too tactful to proclaim that the Madame burnt candles in devout entreaty that the monthly pay checks would never bounce back on account of no funds.

As the Rev. Budley-Long of St. Sebastian's Episcopal Church in Fifth Avenue, where Brook was a vestryman, put it: "Every day is Mother's Day for Adam Brook."

However, Brook never bothered to go to St. Louis to see this mother until she lay on her death-bed.

The fact that Brook did not look a bit French was explained by those who studied the Portia portrait. They believed he favored his father, who now was in the Davy Jones Latin quarter. Certainly Brook seemed Anglo-Saxon, all but the black eyes that sometimes were chips of coal and again were hot and gleaming. His forehead was high and square—a musician's forehead, according to the director of the Boston Symphony group. His hair—not overly thick and trained from a low part on the right side—was brown. His chin was rounded in a determined way, a handsome chin. His upper lip was long beneath a straight nose decidedly short, although Brook continually pinched his nostrils, as though to mold it into aquiline shape. His complexion was clear, his skin smooth and his full cheeks

as ruddy as those of a barmaid—all so different from the skin of the pallid exile of St. Helena....His self-taught Parisian shrugs were clumsy, as though a bug were biting him between the shoulder blades.

Brook took fresh inspiration, once he found a mother. It was as if he had been thirsting for a long time and had come to a clear, sweet pool. His mother, whom he visited not at all, received his flowers wonderingly at first. But she was reminiscent of other impulsive, erratic men. She listened with patience to his garrulous telephone calls. She took presents from this filial-minded *poseur* with a grace that was described as hers when she was pressed close to the bosom of the modern Michelangelo, feeling kisses that burned through a bushy beard....Only one thing did she ask, and this in a most winning, persuasive manner—that he refrain from calling her “Mumsie.” Mamma Yvonne would be better. *Oui! Merci mon fils....* How many mistresses can boast such longevity of embraces—lover-like or son-like?

It is all very mystifying. Life and love are very mystifying. God himself is very mystifying....Adam Brook in reality was the son of a servant girl who worked in the home of Judge Bartwell, Chicago jurist. Brook was the illegitimate son of the Judge's third son....A very old story, indeed....

How Brook's real mother wandered to Des Moines is not clear. What became of her after the delivery of a boy in a home for unmarried girls is uncertain. The boy was named Brook, although the superintendent of the home was unable to learn from the hazy admissions of the

mother whether her name was Brook, Blake, or Burke. The baby was kept at the home; the mother discharged as soon as she had recovered. The night of the discharge a woman's body was found on the train tracks, but it was impossible to identify it.

The Brook boy lived at the foundling home until he was six. He was adopted by a Mr. and Mrs. Adam Braden, who had a section of corn land thirty miles from Sioux City. Adam Braden was much older than his wife. She was not fond of babies, but she preferred adopting one to having a child in the painful manner.

Adam Braden was a good farmer, but he liked best of all to practise bee-culture. His honey was accounted the finest in his community. He was an authority on the ways of bees. He was a kindly man and a rude philosopher, as all men must be after they have studied the ways of insects.

Farmer Braden would have given the boy his full name, but Mrs. Braden objected. The farmer did call him Adam, however, and loved him. He taught little Adam the secrets of the earth and the mysteries of all things that grew. The boy wondered why the woman's name was not Eve.

Chapter Four

*L*DAM BROOK loves the warm, fragrant earth-mold. He seems so small in the new furrows, walking behind the straining back of Farmer Braden and wishing he were old enough to plow. Something sings inside him as he smells the earthy vapors and feels the caress of the mounting sun. The gray horses lean against the collars; the traces are taut and the hooves barely miss the swaying whiffletrees that swipe clods upturned by the burrowing steel share. There is a following of birds to gather earthworms that twist with random stupidity in the world of light....Adam Brook sees, hears, smells and feels deeply. He watches beads of sweat trickle down the back of Farmer Braden's skinny, tanned neck, where criss-cross wrinkles form diamond patches on the weathered skin. Young Brook's legs grow tired, but he plods on with his bare feet in the furrows.

Sometimes at the far end of the field and next to the buckwheat acreage, where bees gather nectar, Farmer Braden stops, loosens the knotted reins that are festooned over and under one shoulder, swabs his face with a blue bandanna and talks some. Young Brook is glad, because

Farmer Braden talks about bees and repeats little rhymes concerning them.

"A swarm of bees in May is worth a load of hay," he says. "A swarm of bees in June is worth a silver spoon. But..." he leans down and again grasps the plow handle, "a swarm in July ain't worth a fly....Cluck! Cluck! Giddap... gee."

A great tragedy comes. Young Brook is anxious to go among the hives, handling the bees as does Farmer Braden, who uses neither gloves nor veil, but carries only a small smoke-pot in which he lets rolls of burlap smolder. But it develops that Brook is susceptible to the acid-poison of bees.

Farmer Braden says that one should not fear bees; they really are sociable little fellows, and with patience one can understand them and be understood.

"You got to wait the proper time," he says, "for bees kind of keep office hours...between ten o'clock in the morning and three in the afternoon; and the day should be a warm one. Don't go around them in cold weather and don't monkey with them at night. And don't get directly in front of the entry, but stand to one side."

Farmer Braden tells Adam: "You ought to wear a veil at first." Adam says he'd rather not wear one. They go out together and soon Farmer Braden has thousands of bees on him, holding handfuls of them and letting them cluster on his face and cover him to the eyes. Adam marvels. Finally, and when the farmer has his bees put away again and just as they start for the house, Adam is stung. He feels like crying out but he doesn't want to spoil things. Later, however, he is ill at the stomach and appears faint.

"You got stung didn't you?" Farmer Braden asks.

"Not much," the boy replies.

"I guess you did. Show me so I can take out the poison sac without busting it."

While he is looking for the poison sac, Farmer Braden notices that red blotches are breaking out on the boy's arms and chest. He listens to the lad's heart beating erratically.

"Come on, Adam; lay down in the shade." The boy lies under an oak tree and Farmer Braden asks his wife to fan him. She looks at the boy sceptically. "Maybe he's just puttin' on."

Farmer Braden replies: "He's been stung. He ain't puttin' on."

The boy is stung another time and Farmer Braden's wife says he oughter keep away from bees. Adam seems sad and lonely, feeling he never can become a bee-keeper. He is upset about it.

Farmer Braden puts his hand on the boy's head. "I've heard of cases like yours, and I heard how it was cured. If you can stand to be hurt some, maybe we can fix it so's you can handle bees."

Adam is hopeful. He trusts Farmer Braden. "I can stand pain if you say so."

The farmer goes out and catches a bee, holding it by the wings. He motions to Adam. "Here, son, put out your hand; the back of it. Now be still while I let the bee sting you just a little bit."

"Don't be a fool," Mrs. Braden says. "The boy shouldn't be around bees anyhow."

Adam Brook's black eyes are wide and his cheeks grow white as he holds out his hand. Farmer Braden applies the bee. "I'll let it set down some, but not enough to work its stinger in too deep or to lose it."

Again Adam breaks out in red blotches, but his sickness is not so acute as in previous instances. Five days later this inoculation is repeated and after another five-day interval it is done again. At the end of two months of Farmer Braden's treatment, Adam seems immune from bee-stings, suffering only slight swellings at the points of contact. He is overjoyed and begins an intensive study of bees.

Farmer Braden sends for literature, giving the boy the works of A. I. and E. R. Root, bee wizards of Medina, Ohio. Adam Brook learns to read in a really ambitious way by poring over the works of the Roots, of Langstroth and of Quimby.

Adam attends rural school six months of the year, riding a sorrel mare three miles to and from the school-house. He excels only in one subject, arithmetic. He is capable of casting up huge sums without aid of pencil or paper. He gives almost instantaneous answers to problems in long division and is able to do compound fractions and work out percentages that involve truly staggering tables. For his adroitness in a county-wide test, sponsored by the chairman of the annual fair, Adam Brook wins a prize at the age of eleven. The prize is a story of Napoleon's life. From this time on, Adam Brook has one hero and one model—Napoleon.

When he learned that the bee was a great symbol for Napoleon, Adam Brook felt intuitively that their lives were in some mysterious manner linked to one another. Later he was sure of it, although he never said as much.

Chapter Five

SCANDAL comes to the farm when Adam is fifteen.

Farmer Braden's rheumatism has set in with the time of harvesting and he calls in a drifter named Peter Arnold to help boss the men in the fields. Farmer Braden now is seventy-one years old and his wife is between forty and fifty. Peter Arnold is thirty-five. He is hairy and big; not handsome but very strong. There is a crescent-shaped scar on his dark face, from the right side of his shallow brow to his thin lower lip. He smells sourly of whiskey, which he keeps in a jug in the attic quarters of the two-story, white clapboard farmhouse. He has long, thick arms that hang ape-like when he walks. He seldom smiles and the men grumble against him, but he does the work of three and Farmer Braden says that Big Peter is a first-rate hand.

Farmer Braden's rheumatism reaches an inflammatory stage, his left leg swelling and causing him to awaken at night. He says he guesses he will drive over to Neighbor Miller's to get some camphor and eucalyptus liniment. No, he won't send for Doc Wilkins. If it was a horse or cow that was ailing, yes, but men should doctor themselves.

"Maybe you should take some whiskey for it," Big Peter says.

Farmer Braden shakes his head. "No; I ain't never took none and don't mean to."

Adam suggests that Farmer Braden let him go for the liniment. "It wouldn't take more than a couple of hours if I pushed the mare along."

"No, Adam," Farmer Braden says. "I'll go." He leans close to Adam's ear. "Besides, I got some money comin' due from Neighbor Miller. I need it to pay off the hands." Farmer Braden looks about suspiciously, feeling that Peter Arnold has overheard him.

Adam goes with Farmer Braden to the stable, which is but a short walk from the farmhouse. Adam hitches Old Blackie, a pensioned gelding that is used only for drives, to the surrey. Farmer Braden would prefer riding in the saddle astride Adam's sorrel mare, but his leg is paining him. He watches Adam back Old Blackie between the shafts and sees the boy's slim fingers snap the hold-backs after he has affixed the tugs.

"What you so quiet about, son? Thinkin'?"

"Yes, thinkin'."

"What you thinkin' on?"

Adam threads the reins and anchors them between the whip-socket and the dash. He helps his foster-father into the seat. "I don't like Big Peter."

"Why not?"

"I don't know why, but I hate him. You don't like him, neither."

Farmer Braden takes the leather ribbons. "Listen, son,

Big Peter's a good hand. Anyways, you oughtn't to hate. It eats you up inside. But if you do hate, do it without sayin' nothin' to nobody."

Farmer Braden leaned down and lowered his voice: "Say, son, keep this to yourself, but I'm plannin' on sendin' you off to school this fall. How does that sound?"

Adam's face brightened. "Won't it cost a lot?"

Farmer Braden rubbed his sore leg. "Now don't tell, but that money I am collectin' from Neighbor Miller is goin' to be yourn. It *is* yourn."

"Mine?"

"Exactly. It's to take you to the agricultural school at Ames, where you'll learn to be an up-to-date farmer; one that will be able to make good against the city Shylocks. I told you I needed the money to pay off the hands. Nothin' of the sort. I'm collectin' it to send you to school."

Adam was unable to speak. Farmer Braden flipped the reins against Old Blackie's rump and started off. "Tell Mrs. Braden not to expect me back right sudden; I've got to talk a spell with Neighbor Miller."

Adam returned to the house to deliver the message and to see if he could get an extra piece of pie before going to the fields. Mrs. Braden was clearing away the mid-day dishes. "The pie's all et up," she said. Her back was to the boy. The door between the kitchen and the sitting room was open. He could see Big Peter sprawled out near the fireplace and smoking a cob pipe. Adam thought Big Peter wore a self-satisfied smirk.

Big Peter got up, knocked his pipe-bowl on an andiron and pocketed the pipe. Then he started upstairs. Adam

guessed he was going to take a drink from his jug. Big Peter called down: "Hey, you, Adam, go on to the south field with Jake and Ed. Tell 'em I'll be there after a spell."

"If there ain't no pie," Adam said to Mrs. Braden, "could I have a slice of bread and cherry preserves?"

Mrs. Braden was drying her rough hands on a flour-sack towel. "There ain't no cherry opened. You can have apple sauce."

"I guess I'll go without," Adam said.

"You oughtn't to stuff yourself so full, what with the sun this hot."

Adam left. He was about a furlong from the house when he heard a commotion coming from the horse-barn which lay between him and the farmhouse. He turned and loped towards the barn, entering it to find that his sorrel mare had caught her off-forefoot between two stall-bars. Adam worked for two minutes or more in freeing her. He examined her and found she had scraped the hide from her shin. Adam was over-fond of his mare, who was growing old after years of taking him to and from the rural schoolhouse. He looked about the barn for clean rags to bind the shin, but there were only greasy rags. He went to the house for clean ones.

As Adam went into the kitchen—he had not intended to be stealthy in entering the house—he heard voices coming through the dining-room door-panels.

His foster-mother's voice was the one most clearly heard. "It's wrong, Peter, and we shouldn'ta done it."

Big Peter's tone was thick and lazy. "Aw, you make me sick!"

"But we shouldn'ta. I didn't want it should be thataway with us and you know it. I feel like a common hussy."

"Shet up!"

Adam fancied he heard the woman weeping. "What would the old man say if he knowed it was thataway with us? Mebbe he would kill us."

A loud, terrible laugh. "Kill us? Haw! Haw! How could a turkey-neck like *him* do anything to me?"

"I've heard of cases. Anyway, no good can come of it. It's defyin' Providence for a wife to fool her husband."

"Shet up, will you? If you don't shet up, I'll not come to you no more thataway."

"I didn't mean nothin', Peter. Honest, I didn't mean nothin'. You wouldn't stay away from me now it's happened, would you?"

"Yes, I would stay away from somebody that whines and is scared. The old man's no good. You said so yourself. Now didn't you say he is no good?"

Adam heard no reply. Perhaps she nodded. Then Big Peter went on, mumblingly: "There, that's better. Quit snifflin' and pull yourself together."

"Then you do love me after what's happened?"

"Aw, sure I do. Why not? I'm sort of let down now and need another drink. Just because I'm let down kind of, why should you sniffle and make out that I'm cold? A man gets cold when he's let down; but he don't stay cold. Now quit snifflin', for Jesus sake!"

"The old man trusts you and he trusts me."

"Are you goin' to bring all that up again? For Jesus sake, get that fool look off'n your face, or I'm through!"

"Don't say it thataway, Peter. You don't love me the same; I can tell you don't."

"By God, I do, but why do you wear that fool look?"

"I can't help it, Peter. I wish'd we hadn'ta done it."

A laugh. "For Jesus sake, you make me sick! You'd a thunk I had a-busted into a church and stole a Bible, the way you talk."

"Tell me, Peter, don't it mean nothin' much what I give you?"

"You better pull yourself together before that old fool comes back, and you better be damn sure not to say nothin' about what's happened, see?"

"I ain't sayin' nothin'...just thinkin'."

"Well, quit thinkin' too much.... Here, kiss me, before I go to the field.... What did I hear the old man say about goin' for money?"

"Neighbor Miller owes him some for a long time."

"How much might it be?"

"About a thousand dollars.... The old man don't know I seen his ledger."

A whistling sound. "It's a lot of money!"

"Yes."

"Will he sure get it?"

"He'll bring it back with him."

A silence. "Well, honey, I want you to know I love you—I want always it should be thataway, honey."

Another pause. Then the man's voice. "Maybe I shouldn't go to the field at all this afternoon. Maybe I should stay here with you, honey."

A frightened tone. "No, Peter, you go to the field; Adam may think somethin'."

A snarl. "He's a snoopy little fool. I'd like to get rid of him and I'd like to get rid of the old fool.... Well, honey, I'm off to the field. Remember, tonight behind the cow-barn."

"I wish there wouldn't be no moon tonight."

"We'll go inside the barn."

"I love you so much, Peter."

"I'm off to the field. Remember, tonight—after the old fool begins to snore."

Adam hastened on tip-toe to the back porch. He was on the last of four steps when Big Peter came through the kitchen door, walking unsteadily and shaking his uncurried head like a long-haired hound coming out of a swimming hole. When he saw Adam, Big Peter frowned.

"Where you been, lummox?"

Adam wished he were big enough to strike Peter. "I been to the barn. My mare hurt her leg."

"The hell you say! Well, you been hangin' 'round the house, too, ain't you?"

"No, I ain't been hangin' around the house, either!"

"Well, get along to the field and don't bother about no mare."

Big Peter took Adam by the arm and almost carried him along. His fingers dug into the flesh.

"You been a good wife, Annie." Farmer Braden moved as though to touch her shoulder again, but she had started to the kitchen, carrying a platter heaped high with hog-bones, crusts and potato skins. Farmer Braden groped in his vest pocket and found a piece of slippery elm, which he put in his mouth. "Well, come on, Adam." The old man and the boy passed through the kitchen, where Mrs. Braden was filling the big coal-oil reading lamp. Another, smaller lamp, which belonged on a bracket near the stairway, where it burned all night, was beside the reading lamp. Big Peter still sat in the dining room, smoking stoically, his great legs stretched out near the hearth and his arms dangling at the sides of his chair.

"We won't be gone long, Annie," Farmer Braden said. Mrs. Braden lighted the lamps. She carried the large one to the dining-room table, setting it there, watching the flame absently and readjusting the wick when black smoke came from the fluted throat of the chimney. As she started back for the night-lamp, she passed close to Big Peter, who had been looking at her black cotton stockings as she leaned over the table to brush crumbs from the red-checkered cloth. He reached out and took hold of her. He caught her apron. She jerked away and a seam was ripped open at the waist-band.

She was shaking. "Ain't you got no sense?"

Big Peter let go and sank back sullenly in his chair. When Mrs. Braden returned with the night-lamp, she avoided him by passing the other side of the table on her way to the wall-bracket. She moved a hassock which was made of tin cans, covered by carpet, pushing it with one

foot until it was beneath the wall-bracket. Then she stepped onto the hassock.

Big Peter got up. "I'll fix the lamp for you, Annie."

She gave him the lamp hesitantly. "For goodness' sake, don't call me 'Annie' when anybody's around."

"You always call me 'Peter,' don't you?"

She retreated toward the stair. "Don't do things so plain."

He set the lamp in position and followed her. "Do you think he got that money?"

"He didn't say. I calculate he did."

"Why don't you claim some of it?"

"What good would it do? You know how he is."

Big Peter looked furtively toward the kitchen door. Then he gripped her wrist and drew her abruptly behind a partition that shielded the stairway, out of view of door or windows. "Listen, Annie, let's get that money while he's asleep."

"Let me loose, Peter! You're crazy! Let me loose, I tell you, or I'll call Mr. Braden."

"Like hell you will!" He put his arms about her and pressed her against the partition, letting his hands race crazily over her, crushing the breath from her and kissing her again and again. She felt his teeth sink into her thin, upper lip. A bead of blood showed on her lip.

"O God!" She seemed on the point of fainting. "He said I had been a good wife.... O God...."

She felt hot gushes of breath at her bosom, which was the part of her that age had dealt with most kindly.

Chapter Seven

SEVERAL times as they sat on the top step together, Adam was on the point of telling Farmer Braden about Big Peter and the woman. Yet somehow he couldn't. All of a sudden, in one day almost, Farmer Braden had been struck down by age. His talk sounded strange. He seemed to be speaking of another person, a sort of remote ancestor, when he spoke of himself.

"My affairs is in pretty good shape, Adam, so don't you worry about that thousand dollars Neighbor Miller paid me. It's all yourn for this fall's schoolin'. You're a good, smart boy and you're goin' to have a chanct."

"I'd hate to have you skimp on my account."

"There won't be no skimpin'. This farm is clear and I have five thousand insurance with the Prudential. That all goes to Annie, which is natural. But the thousand is yourn."

"You talk like somethin' was about to happen."

The old man reached under his beard and loosened his collar as though he were having difficulty in breathing. "Listen, son. I'm old. I am sick for the first time—maybe for the last time, too."

"I'd hate to have anything happen. I'd rather not go to school."

"It happens to everybody some time."

As they stood at the door, ready to enter the house, Adam kept thinking of Big Peter and how the man couldn't look Farmer Braden in the eyes as he was peeling the boiled potatoes. He took hold of Farmer Braden's arm. "Say, Father Braden..." he spoke clumsily. "I... I..."

"Well, son, speak up."

Adam thought a trembling was evident in the once sturdy right arm of this good man. "Nothing, only you oughtn't to carry so much money with you."

"Shucks, son! We're among honest people. It'll be in the bank next time I go to Sioux City." He paused. "Say, listen, I wanted to tell you where the money is hid. I ain't carryin' it. If anything should happen to me..."

"Why do you say that? Nothin' can happen. Please don't keep sayin' somethin's goin' to happen."

Adam felt Farmer Braden's beard brushing his ear. "Never mind. If somethin' was to happen, you look under a board inside my closet upstairs. It's the fourth board to the right, as you look to where the Sunday suit is hangin'."

Adam believed his foster-father a bit daft. "You talk funny."

"I feel funny. Remember now, the fourth board. Ever since I was a boy in this here house, I've hid things there. Yes, I feel funny. This evenin' when I was drivin' up to

the south gate, a shadow crossed my path. The shadow come up and hung right over my head."

"Let's go inside, Father Braden."

"Adam, I wouldn'ta paid attention, only it happened thataway with my father, and at the very same spot—him that never had been sick a day in all his ninety-odd year."

"It was the shadow of a cloud."

"The skies was clear after four o'clock, son."

"Then it was a crow flying above you."

"You don't see no crow shadows through a surrey-top."

"Then it was the branch of a tree waving in the wind."

"You know there ain't no trees near the south gate.... No, Adam, it happened thataway to my old father.... Come inside and we'll read the evenin' lesson."

In the sitting room, Father Braden put on steel-rimmed spectacles and sat beside the coal-oil lamp. Adam brought him the family Bible from the unsteady pine pedestal where it had been placed by tradition for three generations of Bradens.

"Where's Peter?" Farmer Braden asked.

Mrs. Braden was sitting beside the dining-room table opposite her husband. One thin hand and forearm rested on her lap and against the torn waistband of her apron. The other hand was on the checkered tablecloth. She was drumming on the table with her waxy fingers. When she failed to reply, Farmer Braden peered over the rims of his spectacles with mild surprise.

"I was askin' you, Annie: I said where's Big Peter?"

SHOE THE WILD MARE

The fingers left off drumming and there was a silence that seemed conspicuous, such as when the ticking of a clock ceases. Mrs. Braden pressed the torn seam snugly against the table-edge, as though to keep it from roaring with guilt. "Oh, Peter's turned in early; said he was tucked out."

"He's a steady worker," Farmer Braden said. "We'll read without him, then." He looked again at his wife, whose throat seemed strained. Her mouth was partly open, as though she wanted to groan but dared not. "You ain't sick, Annie?"

She all but croaked the words: "No...tired..." She caught Adam looking at her steadily. She put her hand suddenly to her mouth. He seemed to be staring at the bead of blood that kept coming from her upper lip and which she kept licking away furtively. Adam turned his gaze to Farmer Braden, who had closed his eyes, as was his custom, letting his warped fingers find at random a place in the big, gilt-edged book. He opened his eyes, blinked, cleared his throat and looked at the place that had been chanced upon. He shifted a dried oak leaf that had been pressed between the pages that now were opened.

"My mother put that leaf there." He offered no further explanation concerning the leaf. In the evening readings, he often chanced on such relics: dried flowers, magazine and newspaper clippings that contained poems or paragraphs of a sentimental or sacred sort; and now and then a card of announcement of birth, marriage, death. Farmer Braden again cleared his throat. "I read from Isaiah, eleventh chapter, beginning with the fifth verse.

“‘And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness...’” He left off his nasal monotone and looked up at his wife. “You shouldn’t interrupt while I’m reading the Holy Word, Annie.”

She had a scared look. “I never said nothin’.”

He looked at her almost sternly. “Wasn’t you askin’ somethin’?” Her face was the color of the old oak leaf that had been disturbed. “Honest, I didn’t.”

Farmer Braden looked at Adam questioningly. “I positively heard it.”

Adam shook his head. “No one said anything, Father Braden.”

The old man bent above the book again but didn’t resume reading. “Here, Adam, put it back on the stand and lay my specs on top of the book. I’m goin’ to turn in.... Good night, all.”

They watched him mount wearily toward his room. He held fast to the banister rail and breathed wheezily. His head was back; his beard stood out like some sort of weed, and he seemed to be listening...and hearing.

“I’ll lock up the house,” Adam said.

Mrs. Braden was licking at her lip again. “No, I’m goin’ to do the dishes, so they won’t clutter up the kitchen in the mornin’.” She turned away as though the boy had voiced an accusation. “You go ahead and see if Mr. Braden wants anythin’.”

Chapter Eight

BY 10 o'clock Farmer Braden was snoring. The katydids were sawing away and the slightest of breezes stirred the old shutters of Adam's closet-like room at the head of the stairs. It was formerly a sewing room and adjoined Farmer Braden's large room in the east wing, where he could see the birth of each day. On the other side of Adam's room was the attic stairway and beyond that and in the west wing, Mrs. Braden's room, where she had slept alone for the last fifteen years.

The rattle of dishes had ceased and Adam wondered why Mrs. Braden hadn't come upstairs. Still, he didn't wonder, because through his mind kept racing the words: "I wish there wouldn't be no moon tonight."... "We'll go inside the barn." The barn! That's where Neighbor Miller brought his cows to Farmer Braden's Holstein bull. That's where Adam had peeked at manifestations of animality that had made life and its sources seem grotesque, morbidly forbidding. Chickens weren't so horrible to look upon...but cows and horses...the shrill piping of pigs. ... "We'll go inside the barn."

There was a shuffling of feet overhead and a com-

plaint of attic stairs. Adam buried his face in his pillow and shook as though some huge rat had him by the throat.

A long hour goes, and then a downstairs clock beats eleven times on a tinny gong. The katydid...six weeks until frost....

Adam has a hollow feeling that never again will he find sleep. Still, he must have been asleep, for he has seen quite plainly a moon that wore a crescent-shaped scar. There! He sees it now, a moon that is alive—a sort of monster that whirls about a black sky chasing a star. The star is wearing a blue calico wrapper and an apron of gingham. The moon's scar proves to be a mouth that sends out burning vapors. And now the moon pounces on the strangely-appareled star, gobbling it up, calico dress, apron and all, and munches the star down as one might chew and swallow a chestnut. Only an apron string protrudes from the huge, ugly lips of the moon....

"Adam! Adam!" The voice of his foster-father comes through the night with trumpet clearness. The moon swells up and bursts. "Come here! Quick!"

Adam does not wait to draw on his overalls, his cotton socks or his buckskin shoes. He lurches from his iron cot and hastens to Farmer Braden's room.

"What's wrong, Father Braden?"

There is a sound like the muffled rattle of chains jacketed in canvas sheathes. "Light a lamp....I'm a-smotherin'...the shadow that I saw...Annie!"

The moonlight makes it relatively easy for Adam to find the lamp, but his fingers feel thick and useless as he strikes match after match. Is life like that? Do we stand

in a darkened room called Life, holding a bundle of damp matches that we strike again and again without kindling a flame?

He finally managed the light. He saw how wide Farmer Braden's eyes were; there seemed to be a phlegm on his blue lips. The old man's head was drawn back as though his spine suddenly had been shortened, serving as a check-rein. "My wife . . . get her . . . the shadow over . . ."

"I'll go call her."

Adam felt that Mrs. Braden's room would be empty. He knocked. No answer. He opened the door, lighted a match, looked about. A wave of hatred surged through him. He bit his lip and returned to the hall. He heard a noise from the stairway.

As he passed the head of the stairs, he saw a face in the low light of the hall lamp. It was a yellow mask, haggard, bloodless and wigged by dust-colored wisps of hair. The eyes seemed shrunken, leaving wide, shadowy orbits that appeared much too large for the eyes that once fitted them. When the lids closed over the eyes, there were only two blue blotches in a face that was the color of snow which has been stained by horses. . . . Adam longed to leap down the stairway and to kick in that face with his bare feet; and with his knuckles smash the hand that was groping with witch-like caution for the banister rail.

Adam believed the woman on the stairway saw him as she opened her eyes again, for she put one hand to her lips as she had done earlier in the night, when he had looked so fixedly at her. . . . The barn makes a hag out of a woman. Only cows should go there.

When Adam returned to his foster-father's bed, he knew intuitively that the shadow indeed had come. He never before had witnessed human death; now he saw it for what it was—a robber and a cheat. Still, there was a jubilant feeling, a gladness that the old man had gone without knowing what deceit and filth had been spawned here. Adam was glad that he had not spoken of what had been going on in this old farmhouse.

Mrs. Braden now came in. How wizened she was! She went to the bed, stared and began to shriek. Then Big Peter came in, stumbling with drunkenness. He all but bowled Adam over as he staggered to the bed.

"The old man's dead," Big Peter mumbled. Mrs. Braden had slumped to her knees. Her face was hidden in the frayed but clean patch-work quilt. Big Peter drew the quilt over the old farmer's face, as though to shut out the accusing, dull luster of the fixed eyes. He leaned above Mrs. Braden, touching her, not untenderly. "Here, Annie, don't take on so.... You better go to your room." He motioned to the boy. "Adam, get the hands out of their bunks; then go tell Neighbor Miller."

Adam made no move. He stood there in his short muslin nightshirt, looking like a small priest in some pagan ritual. He stared at Big Peter, who bellowed: "Well, get a move on, ninny! You heard me tell you what to do. You got lead in your backside?"

Adam remained where he was, his nails sinking into his palms. "I'll not leave Father Braden alone with you ...you cheater!"

Big Peter lunged. "You God damned little hound!"

He grasped the boy's wrist, twisting his arm backward and upward, until Adam doubled over. Hot, stinging pains shot through his shoulder blade and arm socket. Peter kicked him. "Now get out before I brain you! I'm the head of this here house and there'll be no coddlin'!"

Adam went to his room, his shoulder paining him. He put on his clothes and shoes. Then he got the men up—rousing Jake, Ed and the other hands, who had been snoring in their bunks. He went to the barn, got his sorrel mare to her feet, saddled her and mounted. Tears fell on his hands as he held the reins on the pommel of his old saddle.

Chapter Nine

LATER the funeral, which had been held the morning following Farmer Braden's death, Big Peter went looking for Adam. He found him in the horse-barn, where he was currying his sorrel mare. Adam knocked the side of the currycomb against the stall stanchion to which the mare was tied and pretended not to hear Peter's greeting.

"Let's not sulk thataway," Big Peter said. "The old man's gone, so let's make the best of it. I'm takin' full charge of everything. That's as it should be. Me an' you can get along like bugs in a rug, only you gotta come down off'n your high hoss."

Adam put the comb and brush on a sill, untied his mare and led her into the stall. Then he went for a measure of oats, returned again to the stall and poured the oats into the feed-box. Big Peter waited for the boy to come out of the stall, but Adam stood there quietly, stroking the mare's withers. Big Peter tried to be patient.

"What happened to the money the old man brought from Neighbor Miller's yestiddy? Hey?"

Adam looked at a pitchfork that stood near the stall of Old Blackie, the mare's companion in the stable. Then

he looked at Big Peter's wide belly. How pleasurable it would be to run the shining thin tines into that big belly!

"What money?"

Big Peter edged into the stall beside Adam while the mare moved suspiciously. "Come on now; don't make out you don't know."

Adam gripped the oat-measure with both hands. "What you talkin' about?"

Big Peter loosened a splinter from a stall slat and played at cleaning his thumb-nail with it. "Sure you don't know?" His words were softly spoken but sinister. "There was a thousand dollars, and it ain't to be found."

"Are you sure he had it?"

"Neighbor Miller showed me the receipt at the funeral. Now where do you suppose it walked off to?"

"I never seen it."

Big Peter sidled out of the stall. He made a short turn of the barn, then took a coil of rope from a harness peg. He began running the stout hempen cord through his large hands. Adam was looking first at Peter and then at the door. He knew he ought to be frightened and he was frightened after a fashion, but somehow he kept remembering how he had been the last to leave the cemetery that day; how he had seen the brown earth fill the grave and how two men had tramped down the earth, executing a grotesque dance. The loam-caked boots of the men had seemed at the time to be thudding against his own chest.

Peter now had tied a running knot in the rope. "What was you and the old man talkin' of on the back stoop afore I turned in? Hey?"

Adam started for the door. "We was talkin' of my goin' to school this fall."

Big Peter blocked the way. He had made a small noose in the rope. "Don't let's be in a hurry for a spell. So, you're goin' to be a fine gentleman, hey? Listen, did you steal that money outa the old man's pocket while he lay dyin'?"

Adam tried to get past the upraised arm. "You low-down cheater, you! Some day I'll kill you...."

Big Peter swiftly slipped the noose about one of Adam's wrists. The boy kicked and struggled. Peter caught Adam's other hand, then turned Adam and tied both his hands behind his back. While Adam squirmed and fought, Peter trussed him in a sort of hog-tie hobble and wrestled him toward a post that supported the hayloft. "You'd kill me, hey! You'd add killin' to stealin'! That means you oughta be locked up somewheres...."

"I'll run away!"

"Not till you tell where you hid that money, you won't!"

He secured Adam to the post, fastening him so that he hung by the wrists, his toes barely touching the rough, wooden floor. Big Peter looked about. He found a check-rein. It seemed too flimsy a weapon. He discarded it in favor of a heavy trace that hung from an old collar. He brought out his jack-knife and cut the trace to four-foot length, swearing as the hide resisted his blade.

He measured the distance between himself and the boy by flicking out the leather. "So you'd kill me, hey?" He snaked back the trace; it lay trailing behind him like

a tail. "I'm askin' you for the last time where you stashed that money you stole?"

"It's a lie; I don't steal."

Big Peter brought his wrist back, shifted his weight to his right leg and sighted over his raised left shoulder. A hiss of leather. The trace seemed to bite through Adam's gray denim shirt and into his slender back. His eyes popped open widely. He writhed. His face went gray. Again the hiss; this time the trace falling diagonally across the small of his back. He felt that the blow had paralyzed his legs from the hips down. He now was hanging limply at the wrist strings; the rope shut off the circulation there. His hands were waxy and wet. He could not help but moan.

Peter struck again and again, as though gripped by a sadistic madness. Occasionally he missed; the lash striking the board floor and sending up clouds of gray stable-dust. The horses plunged and kicked in their stalls; their hooves bombarding the sides of the stalls and the floor. Big Peter had a staring, mad look. There was a hint of foam on his lips. The scar was lime-white in his blood-gorged face. And on Adam's gray shirt a widening patch of blood began to show....Adam felt no pain now. Dimly through it all he again saw the men doing their grotesque dance on a newly-filled grave; vaguely he felt their heavy feet crushing his ribs....Then emptiness and a shadow....

Big Peter, preparing to strike again, felt a touch on his arm. He shook himself as though being roused from sleep. He turned to see Mrs. Braden. Her mouth was open, but no words came.

"You stay out of this!" Big Peter warned.

She moved her jaws, but still no words. She got between the man and the boy. Big Peter lifted the trace and it writhed. "Stay out, I tell you, or you'll get it, too!"

She finally spoke, pointing to the limp, hanging figure. "For God's sake, stop it! You've killed him!"

Big Peter stared. The leather scourge fell. The man shuffled over and touched the boy. "Hey, Adam! Hey, there! What's the matter?"

They let Adam down and Peter carried him to the house.

"We ought to send for Doc Wilkins."

Big Peter put the boy on his bed upstairs. "Shet your mouth, you! Do you want to git into trouble? Hey?"

"But if he don't come to?"

"Then to hell with him!" But Peter was greatly worried.

They worked over Adam for hours, trying to force water down his throat and rubbing mutton tallow on the raw welts that were revealed when they took off the bloody shirt. He didn't even groan, but Big Peter could hear his heart as he listened against Adam's bruised side.

When supper time came, Big Peter said: "Now you keep your trap shet. He'll come to afore long. You go fix somethin' and take it to the men at their bunk-house. Tell 'em the boy is sick and for them to stay away from here."

Chapter Ten

*F*OR several days Adam was only dully aware of living. He had suffered a terrific beating about the kidneys.

"We ought to get Doc Wilkins," said Mrs. Braden. "The hands is all suspicious."

"To hell with the hands! And you shet up about gettin' the doctor." Peter appeared haggard and bewildered.

"The boy's been passin' blood."

"I don't care if he passed vinegar, we get no doctor!" He rubbed his chin where a thick stubble grew, except on the scar. He had not shaved since the day of the whipping.

The farmhands complained at having to eat haphazard meals away from their rightful places at table. Three of them came to the house against Peter's orders and demanded their pay. They said they were quitting.

"Quit and be damned! You get no pay."

Big Peter then sent Jake to town for a new and large supply of whiskey. He kept thinking of the money that he felt should be his, and once he was sure that Adam wouldn't die and that the law wouldn't be on him, he began a search of the whole house. He was concerned

about the old man's insurance, too, Mrs. Braden having been hazy as to where the policies had been laid. Odd as it may seem, Peter attacked the old man's roll-top desk last of all. He couldn't learn from Mrs. Braden where the key was, so he forced the desk open with a cold chisel and went through the drawers and pigeon holes.

He came at length upon the insurance policies, as well as a title and deed to the farm. This discovery mollified him somewhat, but he thirsted most of all for the missing thousand dollars. Cash was more understandable than documents.

The night he found the policies and the other papers, Big Peter complimented Mrs. Braden on her biscuits. "I never seed such good cookin' as yourn, Annie." After the meal and while they drank strong tea, Peter leaned across the table. "I'm goin' to help you with the dishes, Annie."

"No need to; you just set there and smoke."

"No, I won't, neither. I'm goin' to pitch in an' help, because you're lookin' peeked."

"I been worried about the boy."

Big Peter unbuttoned his trousers at the waist to give the biscuits more leeway. "Quit worryin', Annie. He's walkin' around, ain't he?"

"He's gettin' on." She rose and began to scrape the plates with a steel knife. Finally she blurted out: "I can't stand it no longer; I tell you, I can't!"

"Can't stand what?"

"The way he keeps lookin' at me. It's drivin' me daft!"

He got up and went to her. He put a hand on her

shoulder. "Listen, Annie, me an' you is goin' to get married."

She stacked the plates and seemed to be thinking back. Lacking an answer from her, Peter brushed her thin neck with his lips. "What do you say to that, Annie? It's what you wanted all along, ain't it?"

She nodded sadly. "Yes, but it won't look right that we should do it so sudden."

"We ain't livin' on looks. We're gettin' hitched right smart." He lowered his voice. "And then we'll get rid of the lummox."

She shivered. "How do you mean?"

"Never mind how. He's got to go."

"We can't turn him out, Peter."

"Leave that to me and don't you butt in.... We're goin' to slip off tomorrow, Annie, an' git married. Nobody here need know right off."

She took a pyramid of plates to the kitchen. Big Peter changed his mind about helping her. He went upstairs. He didn't go to the attic, because he had moved his jugs to Mrs. Braden's room the morning he had gone out to look for Adam—the morning he had come home from the funeral.

He uncorked a jug that was stoppered by a carrot and drank deeply. He nodded as though some friend had asked him if liquor was good for one's health.

Chapter Eleven

WHEN the harvesting was done and Adam had recovered entirely, he worked among the bee colonies, making ready for the first signs of cold weather. He sat regularly at table but did not speak unless spoken to. His black eyes seemed rounder and brighter than ever. His face was somewhat drawn and his brown hair had been cropped close to his skull in convict fashion. Farmer Braden used to trim Adam's hair every third week, taking a certain pride in the operation. Now Jake, the hired hand, tried to do the job but ended by clipping it all over.

"A hell of a barber you are!" Ed said to Jake. "You got him lookin' like a sick buzzard."

Jake dusted fine hairs from his jumper. "He's a smart 'un though. Do you know he was tellin' me there is an average of 4,800 worker bees to the pound and 2,000 drones?"

"Well, for Jesus sake! Now what good does that do a body to know such fool things?"

"Darned if I know, only he's full of figgers like that."

One evening when Adam brought in a last armful of firewood for the kitchen range, holding the kindling

tucked under his chin and with his free hand gripping the helve of the hand-axe, there was a collision. His head had been tilted at such an angle that he could not have foreseen bumping into Big Peter. Anyway, his mind had been roaming; he had been thinking how Farmer Braden's head had been thrust back by death. As the sticks clattered to the kitchen floor, Adam expected Peter to fly into a temper. But there wasn't even a grunt as Adam put the axe against the wall and began to pick up the wood.

It was a surprise to Adam when Peter helped pick up the wood and stacked it on top of other sticks in the already full box beside the range. He was suspicious when he heard Peter say: "I'm sorry we ever fell out, Adam. Can't we just forgit it an' shake hands?"

Adam was on one knee, wedging a chip beneath a stick to keep the whole pile from tumbling. When he didn't reply to the peace overture, Peter booted the firewood box, the neat pile of sticks falling. "Why do you want to stud-hoss like that? Are you gonna wear a chip on your shoulder all your born days?"

Adam left the wood in a skelter and went to the barn to bed down his mare. Big Peter shuffled profanely to the dining-room. Mrs. Braden was sitting beside the table, darning a sock and pretending not to have been listening.

"We got to get rid of that lummoxx, Annie. We're married now and I'm wearin' the pants in this house."

Mrs. Braden gripped a wool-hidden darning egg. "Be careful what you do, Peter."

Peter pounded the table, causing the darning basket to behave like a Mexican jumping bean. "I'm runnin' this

house an' I won't stand for no studhossin' by nobody!" He went to the window and held the dotted swiss curtains apart. He watched the barn and saw Adam come out to walk reflectively in the apple orchard and among the beehives, which seemed in the twilight like row on row of gravestones. Big Peter turned from the window. "Go out and call that lummo. We might as well have a showdown now as never."

She gathered her darning implements from her lap and put them in the basket. "Not another lickin', Peter?"

"No, not a lickin' this time. You go git him."

She smoothed her hair back as though to rub away a pain. She went out and called Adam, who was juggling a small round stone absently. "Peter wants to speak to you."

Adam moved deliberately to the house and into the room where Farmer Braden used to read the evening lesson at this hour. Adam saw Peter sitting in the same chair that Farmer Braden used for the scriptural readings. He looked at the leering Peter and then at the old Bible on the stand. The dead man's glasses still were there on the book. Then Adam stood before Peter and looked him straight in the eyes.

"Well, you sent for me?"

Peter leaned forward in his chair, his hands spread on the inner sides of his great thighs and his elbows bowed. "Now looka here, Adam, I got a right to insist that you fork over that money." Adam said nothing. "Mebbe it would mean somethin' to you if I told you that me an' Annie is married now."

The boy had a sneering look that maddened Peter: "I've got no money and I wish you'd let up about it."

"If you ain't actually got it, you know damned well where it's stashed away."

"If I don't know, I can't tell."

"You mean *won't* tell!"

Big Peter rose. His wife came to his side. "Don't do nothin', Peter. Let the money go."

He turned on her. "Yeh! Let it go! Who says let a thousand dollars go to a thief?"

"Please, Peter, don't..."

Adam hadn't retreated a step. "Let him do what he wants. Let him kill me if he wants; the big, cheating bully! I wish to God he would kill me.... I don't want to live no more."

Big Peter went to the kitchen. They could hear him booting sticks of wood across the bare floor. He returned carrying the hand-axe. He shook it savagely and his wife shrieked: "O my God! You ain't aimin' to hit him with that, be you?"

He laughed. "No, I ain't. Killin's too good for the likes of him. What I *am* aimin' to do, though, is to go to the horse-barn and brain that God damned sorrel mare of his'n!"

Adam's throat was dry and burning, as though it had suddenly been dusted with lye. "Say, you wouldn't do that! You couldn't do that to an animal that's never done nothin' but work... you couldn't..."

It was getting dark now and Big Peter looked like a shadow of someone waving a stiff flag. He seemed much

larger than he was, even, in the deepening twilight. "Well, you jest watch how I bash in her God damned fat head!" He laughed with hollow mockery, his laughter sounding as does an imprisoned echo in a rain barrel. "Jest you watch, damn you!"

Adam lunged at the great shadow, trying to catch hold of the hand-axe. "Don't kill my mare! Don't! It's all I got. Besides, she ain't never done nothin' but work...."

"Then tell me where that money is stashed; either that or ..."

Adam spoke slowly, wearily. "All right, then. All right...I never seen the money, but he told me where.... He said it's under his closet floor....Fourth board to the right, he said, to the right as you look to where the Sunday suit..." The boy paused and swallowed. "I forgot that he was buried in the Sunday suit...fourth board to the right, looking to where the Sunday suit used to be...."

He sank into the old reading chair, put his face on the table and stuffed the checkered cloth between his lips so that the others could not hear too plainly the cries that beat against his teeth.

Chapter Twelve

BIG PETER got roaring drunk. He prowled the house all night, carrying a jug as though he were a prisoner holding a ball chained to him. Occasionally he broke something by way of diversion. He smashed a crayon enlargement of Farmer Braden that hung in a scrolled, gilt frame above the fireplace. He flung the big Bible through the parlor window, cutting his wrist on an arrow-head of glass. He did many vile things, laughing and singing and describing in ancient Anglo-Saxon terms what he was doing to the parlor carpet; all for the benefit of the fear-stricken woman and boy upstairs. One deed that seemed to amuse him hugely was the finding of his wife's darning egg, on which he sat and clucked like a hoarse hen.

When morning came, Big Peter was barely able to walk, but he got another jug and ambled to the bunk-house, where only Jake and Ed now were left. He dragged the men from their blankets and sought to wrestle with them. When they refused, he quarreled and alleged they were yellow-bellied sons of bitches. The men demanded their pay. He refused. The men left the bunk-house, saying

they were going to Neighbor Miller's, but that they would return with the sheriff.

He winked and made lewd gestures. "Bring the sheriff's wife, too, and I'll..."

The men hurried off. Mrs Arnold was up and in the kitchen. Through the door she viewed the wreck this man had made of her household... *his* household now....

Adam stayed in his room, looking through a dormer at Big Peter, who was careening through the chicken pens, opening the wire gates and letting the fowl run loose. He was dancing, a strangled cockerel in one hand and his almost emptied jug in the other and singing: "When a hearse goes by." He was drooling.

Adam saw him sit finally in a wheel-barrow full of manure and then slump into a drunken stupor.

The boy sat on his bed, a hand to his face. Then he nodded, got up and looked about his small room. He began quietly to pack a few personal belongings in a coarse towel that hung on a rod near his wash-stand. Among these things was the story of Napoleon, the book he had won in the County Fair contest. He took his Sunday clothes from a curtained press and put them on. He waited until Mrs. Arnold went to the front of the house. There was the sound of broken glass being swept against the tin of a dust-pan.

He looked out the window again and saw the man topple from the barrow, face down and one leg drawn up and outward. Then Adam slipped to the barn. He saddled and bridled the sorrel mare, tied his bundle to the pommel

and led her to a clump of oaks a hundred yards or so from the horse-barn.

The boy returns to the house and finds a jar of honey. It is a mason jar with a screw-top. Next he improvises a bee-veil from one of the dotted swiss window-curtains. And now he picks up a pair of old cotton gloves that have ribbed wristlets. Then he rips two narrow strips from a gingham apron and ties his trouser legs snugly at the ankles. He puts on the gloves, adjusts his bee-veil, picks up the mason jar and goes to the barrow beside which Big Peter is sprawled. Flies are crawling on the man's nose and inspecting the white scar, but he does not twitch, and Adam knows Peter is thoroughly stupefied. Volleys of alcohol come with each snore.

Adam sets to work earnestly, efficiently. He unlaces Peter's heavy boots, drawing first one and then the other from the sweaty feet. Next he removes the sagging socks, through one of which a great toe sticks out like the bald head of a monk from a cowl. He works hard to get the man's sweater-coat off and still harder to release the great arms and chest from the fleece-lined undershirt. The trousers are more easily managed, once the waistband is forced past the draft-horse hips. There are no drawers....

Adam is ready. You cannot see his face; the dotted swiss veil hides whatever hatred that may be there—that must be there.

The boy unscrews the sticky top of the mason jar. Then he picks up a twig and begins dropping amber bits of honey on Big Peter's naked belly, as though preparing to tattoo him. Not too much honey, for he wants to anger

the bees by giving them unearned sweets and then having the supply become exhausted swiftly. Next he replaces the top of the jar and goes to the hives, lifting the supers and shaking the colonies that already have begun to sing a hymn of wonderment as they catch the scent of the honeyed drunkard at their doors. And now Adam dashes off, and as he reaches his mare and looks back, he sees that the air is thick with bees.

Adam takes off gloves and veil, leaps to his mare's back without stirrumping his feet, and digs her flanks with his heels. What a gloating light in the popping black eyes! He gallops swiftly up the lane and to a hummock that marks the boundary of the Braden property to the north. Adam reins in and sits there on his horse, watching. There are terrifying cries.

He sees a staggering, swaying figure. One would not judge it to be a nude figure—not with that great, thick, swirling, black cloak extending from pain-tossed head to tormented feet. The figure lunges forward, reaching as though to embrace the cool, sweet air of morning; but not reaching as though to clasp a loved one in a barn. Rather to make a dying reach for a crucifix....

ADAM BROOK rides on and on until night gathers, pausing only at irrigation ditches where he and his animal drink of muddy waters. On and on they go, so tired. The mare's head droops lower to the dirt road. The shaven head of the boy hangs down as though a bundle as big as the moon were on his slumped shoulders. On and on...

It is night and he is at the outskirts of a place that is manifestly larger than a town. He judges it to be Sioux City. He dismounts, takes his bundle from the pommel, leads his mare to a stretch of prairie where grazing may be had, loosens the girth and removes saddle and bridle. He puts his arm about the hot neck of his mare and then turns to go. She follows him and finally he has to go back, find the bridle and hobble her with the reins. He feels he will be less apt to be questioned if he is alone.

As Adam walks, the streets of the city become more thickly set with houses, in several of which lights are glowing. He has no plans. He moves onward in a straight line, fancying that Napoleon, if similarly placed, would march in this fashion. Now he is on a street car line and he follows that through a business section and then, after some deliberation, sets off along a side street which is not brilliantly lighted and where there are fewer persons than hurried past him in the business blocks. Finally he smells a musty odor and hears the mild lapping of water. He is on the bank of the great Missouri River. The lazy night-sounds of autumn, frogs singing, waves lapping and distant voices soothe him. He looks about for a place to sleep.

Out of the moonless night comes a figure. It is a policeman who has been following Adam for quite a while. Adam is unable to answer questions satisfactorily. He is taken to the police station and lodged there overnight. He will not reveal his name, but a gray-moustached sergeant looks in the Napoleon book, puckers his brows and nods.

"That's your name written in the book; ain't it, kid?"

The next morning a magistrate holds Adam for investigation and on suspicion of being a fugitive. Adam stays in the City Jail for nearly three weeks, and life now seems to be a distant, intangible thing that has been dreamed but not actually lived.

One day a keeper signals to Adam Brook and then delivers him to a man in citizen's clothing. The strange man, who wears thick eyeglasses and has a remarkably large elk-tooth watch charm, tells Adam he is a juvenile officer. That means nothing to Adam. The officer takes him to a large and busy building, where men, who have the faces of undertakers, skurry about, carrying small, flat satchels and books with buff bindings. Adam is led into a room where children are sitting beside grown-ups on a bench inside an oak rail.

A man with rimless spectacles that seem on the point of falling from his thin nose sits at a high, carved bench and on a dais. He is holding a gavel in his hand. Near him and on a smaller, lower dais, is an empty, homely chair with wire struts attached to the legs and the legs fastened to the dais with elbow-straps of iron. There are several other men at a table on which the high dais looks down. They may or may not be friends, for they speak to one another with non-committal courtesy. One of them pours a glassful of water from a squat glass pitcher that has a chipped lip. He nods to the juvenile officer over the rim of the tumbler and peers exploringly at Adam Brook. The juvenile officer will not answer the few questions Adam has asked, merely looking terribly wise through his thick eye-glasses and playing with the large elk-tooth charm.

Adam does not know, but feels that this stage is set for him; that it is a preface to his being hanged.

Adam glances furtively about the room. It is only partly filled, and he knows no one here. Then there is a stir. A door opens at the rear of the room and at the head of a wide aisle leading to the railed enclosure. Adam watches that door. The hinges squeak like hungry mice. A huge man with a bandaged face and throat shambles in. He is supported on one side by a man in uniform. He carries a cane, which he pokes ahead of him uncertainly. You cannot see his face, any of it, except a swollen twist of a nose that is as large and bumpy as a doughnut. Adam knows who the man is. A slim and bloodless woman follows the man, and Adam knows her, too. He is very ill at the stomach as Big Peter is eased slowly into a chair and Mrs. Arnold puts a pillow to his back.

Then, almost before he knows what is happening, Adam is sitting in that bolted-down chair on the little dais. He is hearing himself reply, vaguely, to questions that are being asked by the man who nodded to the juvenile officer while drinking from the water tumbler. This man stands insinuatingly close to him, peering into his face as though he wants to learn if Adam has a sore throat.

It is all very unreal and strange. Perhaps it is a dream. But, no, he has heard himself talk and tell the truth, and he has heard a mumbling voice coming from beneath bandages while a man lies. Yes, and he has heard hesitant lies come from the woman who carefully refrains from looking at Adam.

Nor can it be a dream when the man with the thin

nose and the unsteady eye-glasses lifts his gavel and utters the most cruel words in the kindest of voices.

"You, Adam Brook, are remanded to the custody of the Superintendent of the State Industrial Farm as incorrigible. You shall remain there until you shall have attained the age of twenty-one years; there to labor as directed by the Superintendent.... Let this be a life-long lesson to you not to lie, cheat, steal and disobey your superiors.... Next case, clerk."

Adam Brook, hardly sixteen years old, goes to the Reform School....

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PART TWO

Chapter One

A YOUNG woman named Ellen Gage became interested in Adam Brook while he was serving his third year at the Industrial Farm. He was nineteen and she was twenty-one. Miss Gage was not beautiful. She had brown hair that was sleeked back unromantically and she wore tailored suits of mannish pattern.

This young woman was the only child of the Hon. George W. Gage, a widower and former Congressman. He now had an erratic practice as a patent attorney and enjoyed certain political standing on account of his activities in behalf of state granges. He was a former schoolmate of the Governor of Iowa, with whom he went fishing each year in Colorado trout streams. The Governor was Ellen Gage's godfather.

The Hon. Mr. Gage was a gaunt, pleasant man, whose political rating was enhanced by his resemblance to portraits of Abraham Lincoln. His square-top derby, his high, winged collar and black string-tie were known in Republican conventions everywhere. It was said of him that he could have risen to great heights, had he not been so fond of jokes.

"Nobody trusts a man who laughs," he explained to his friend, the Governor of Iowa. "We are presumed to be a people of wit and liveliness, but we cannot stomach gaiety in our leaders. Our public servants, from aldermen up, must have the stern visages of Hebrew prophets, although the masks may conceal the cerebral cells of jackasses."

The Hon. Mr. Gage was widely gossiped about as he walked the street of a winter's day, an old gray shawl about his shoulders emphasizing his resemblance to Lincoln. It was whispered he had led a fast life; that he didn't believe in God, and that he was pampering his daughter beyond his means. He had sent her to Wellesley, when (as anyone in Dodge City knew) the State Normal would have been plenty good enough.

Mr. Gage's love of a joke barred him from going a second time to Congress. It seems there was an epidemic of clandestine love affairs in progress among the young folk of his district. When asked to express an opinion concerning this condition, he said:

"My friends, you may write letters attacking this habit; you may preach from all the pulpits of Christendom; you may have motion pictures condemning it; yes, you even may legislate against it; but never, my friends, never will you be able to make it unpopular with the masses!"

His campaign manager urged him to deny having made this statement, but the Hon. Mr. Gage chuckled and took a drink. Nor was this statement enough to satisfy his sense of the ridiculous. He circulated a rumor that

he himself was enamored of a nameless young woman and that they made a point of frequenting a wooded dell at the outskirts of the city. He then enlisted the aid of a crony, Captain Jerry Pastorfield, who owned a Dodge City cigar store. Together they went to the supposed place of carnal activity and awaited a committee of citizens who nightly prowled the glades with lanterns.

When the committee came on the Congressman, they flashed their lanterns and saw him lying beside Captain Pastorfield's wooden cigar store Indian. This sealed his doom as a public servant, but he still was powerful enough in political circles to ask favors of his friend, the Governor.

He asked the Governor to give his daughter, Ellen, a job. The Governor said he was only too glad to do so; that he regarded the girl as exceptionally intelligent and shrewd.

"She didn't inherit these qualities from you," the Governor hastened to add.

Chapter Two

ELLEN GAGE came home from school with a brilliant academic record, and the town wasn't big enough to hold her father. He was bedfast with a recurrent liver condition, but he got up early to meet the train, pondering whether or not to hire a brass band.

The girl had a bachelor's degree in science and a year of post-graduate work in economics and sociology. Her godfather, the Governor of Iowa, offered her a place on his newly-appointed commission for a survey of state prisons. His hobby was the rehabilitation of criminals.

The Governor turned over various reports, pointing out that the State Industrial Farm was doing amazingly fine work for young criminals.

"If mere boys can do so well, our other institutions should follow suit," he said. "You have a free hand, Ellen, so work along the lines you see fit."

During this talk Ellen's father came from a conference with a client. He threw a bundle of papers on the Governor's desk. "Here's some wall paper," he said.

The Governor looked at the documents. "What are they, George?"

"One of my clients went broke building a fifty-mile railroad out west. He gave me these certificates as a retainer."

"Are they worthless?"

"Absolutely. I'm giving them to Ellen for a present." He handed the papers to his daughter. "Here, honey. Have a railroad. The jolly old Idaho & Eastern."

She held her father's cheeks between strong hands. "Never you mind. We'll all have money some day."

He smiled on her. "I hope my liver holds out that long." He turned to the Governor. "I made two mistakes in life. One was beginning drinking and the other was quitting it."

ELLEN interviewed Major Richards, Superintendent of the State Industrial Farm. He described many improvements of the last three years; the building of great silos; adoption of the intensive method of farming, with scientific rotation of crops; the purchase of blooded draft horses which returned handsome profits in stud fees; the establishment of an apiary that was the envy of bee-keepers everywhere.

She congratulated the Major and he eyed her with good-humored frankness. "Well, young lady, I can't take undue credit. The truth is that one of our inmates, a chap named Adam Brook, has done more to put this farm on a paying basis than myself or the four wardens before me. It's an amazing story. Want to hear it?"

"Yes, I do."

"All right then. Well, Brook is nineteen or thereabouts. They warned me he was a bad one and to keep him under close observation. I was surprised when they brought in an undernourished kid with a big forehead and black eyes. And he had a bad case of chicken pox. No killer here, I thinks; just a dumb kid.

"'Where'd you get that chicken pox, son?' I asks. Then he says: 'You can quit laughing at me. I got trouble enough.' I ordered him to the hospital wing. And was he sick? You see he never had any kid diseases before."

"What is he here for?"

"Almost everything. He stole, attempted murder and all the rest.... But to get back. No sooner is he done with chicken pox than he comes down with mumps. He was sick a long time. Mumps are not to be trifled with in a growing boy. But never mind that. I visited him a lot. He had the funniest mind I ever bumped against. Full of figures. He knew how many beans in a bushel; how many peas in a pound; how many—well, it puzzled me.

"'You count everything, don't you, son?' I asks. He looked at me a long while and said: 'There were fourteen thousand, five hundred bees on the man I hated, and I hope each one took hold.' You see he set bees on a man who tried to discipline him."

The Major was interrupted by a telephone call. Then he resumed. "Where was I? O yes. Well, when he began to get better, I put him in the bookkeeping room. In three weeks he had reorganized the whole accounting department and the store-rooms. We were able to release four

trusties to other work. I never saw such a head for figures."

"How was he in other respects?"

"He never has given us a bit of trouble. Never says much and reads all the time."

"Novels?"

"He doesn't care for them at all. I allow him to stay up after curfew and use the store-room office for his study. What a memory! He can read a whole book on agriculture, business or industry and repeat it word for word. I know you don't believe me. It's amazing."

"Doesn't he read anything of a literary nature?"

"Only the lives of people. Napoleon in particular. He is crazy about Napoleon. One day he asked me if I would invest in some bees. I hesitated, but finally, and out of my own pocket, I set him up with a few colonies. He soon had as fine an apiary as anyone could want and we now make a lot of money out of bees."

"May I see him?"

"Certainly." The Major pressed a buzzer and a trusty responded. "Here, Trusty, tell Brook to come to my office."

Ellen was eager to see him. "Do the other inmates like Brook?"

"Hardly. He stays inside himself too much for them. Knows too much and that mystifies them.... Here he is now, Miss Gage. Under the rules I can't introduce you."

Adam Brook entered the room and stood at attention. He didn't appear to notice the visitor. He saluted the Major.

"Yes, sir."

"Brook, take my Ford and guide this lady over the place. Show her everything and answer all her questions."

Brook again saluted. "Yes, sir."

Adam went to the garage for the Ford and the Major escorted Ellen Gage to the door. The girl looked at the boy's erect, rather short body as he walked away. She did not think him at all unattractive and she felt that he suffered intensely while wearing that loose-hanging uniform of gray.

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Chapter Three

A *DAM BROOK* began to look forward to Ellen's visits. He was conscious of no physical attraction; indeed, the memory of Farmer Braden's betrayal gave him such repugnance that he believed sex a monster that should be let sleep in its cave. His only knowledge of love, aside from the brutal episode on the Braden farm, came from inmates of the reformatory. The starkness of imprisoned echoes drove Adam Brook further within the house of his virginity. He heard others whimper for women, and he did not understand. He saw others come to the field, the shop and the barns; hollow about the eyes, faces pale and lips twitching, and he could not comprehend. His chastity, then, was not won after nocturnal battles with self, when sleep leaves the bed and blankets are twisted into ropes....How could anyone long for baseness when Freedom was the ultimate?

Ellen Gage *was* Freedom. Not in her steady, calm eyes did Adam Brook find a message that before long was written there. Nor did he see in her slender body anything but a machine that took her wherever she willed in a free world. Yet he could and did talk to her. She could

and did listen. He was reserved with others—what, indeed, had anyone here to offer his ego?—yet he was talkative with Ellen. He watched her narrowly at first, making sure she was not laughing inwardly. But she never laughed. His ego found a mirror.

Adam had known the girl for nine or ten months. She put many books in his way but he asked her to quit giving him “literary” works. He liked to read the dictionary, so she sent him a large one. When he was sure he was alone, he practised pronunciations.

One day Major Richards was entertaining Captain Cascaden, a fellow officer in the Spanish-American War. They took a walk through the bee-yards. Adam was among his colonies, inspecting the foundations to guard against hives blowing over or tipping and causing the bees to build combs out of plumb. He was pronouncing a long list of words from the “M’s” of his dictionary and did not notice the approaching men. In fact, he was listening to a murmur from one of the hives. He was leaning over, thinking that virgin queens were about to come out for nuptial flights. It was a hot July afternoon and already young drones were in the air, trying their wings, several of them dashing drunkenly against his cheek.

Adam heard a laugh. He straightened and saluted. The last of his “M” words remained in his throat, buzzing like the young queens in the hive. His face was red.

Major Richards was holding Captain Cascaden’s arm. “We have four hundred colonies, Cascaden. Our honey had a clean sweep at the fair...” The Major’s voice trailed off as they walked away, but Adam heard the higher, more

vibrant voice of the Captain: "Is that one of the mental cases?"

Adam winced. He saw the Major shake his head. Young Brook repeated no more "M" words that day. Instead he kept saying the name: "Cascaden." He had laughed at him. Well, one day he would get even with that Cascaden.

He forgot his embarrassment for a while as he moved among the colonies, visualizing himself as a worker bee and Freedom—how long the day!—as a comb of honey. He fancied that each hour was a bit of honey that he, a toiling bee, deposited in the hexagons of Freedom's comb. Did those that had freedom know what it meant? They might learn something of its preciousness if they were aware that it took an average of 20,000 trips of a heavily-laden bee to transport a pound of honey.

Each hour for Adam was a trip with his little cargo of honey. He had it all counted. He was serving a term of 43,824 hours—how closely he had computed, allowing even for one leap-year day. That would be more than two pounds of honey....Let others take their honey, spreading big chunks on bread, gulping it down, smacking their lips and calling it Play, Leisure, Love—Adam Brook would make the world pay dearly for his two pounds of Freedom.

He looked to see if that fool army officer was about. Then he said aloud: "Only 2880 more hours."

There had been two days of rain, the bad weather having kept the bees to the hives. Now it was warm and the stir increased within the hive that first had attracted

his ears. With an experienced eye he saw a young queen emerge, poise momentarily on the bottom-board and then fly. At least fifteen drones followed her, all flying low, faster and faster, in erratic circles. Like a small swarm they were, the drones speedier than the queen. They dashed about in a mad race, sometimes rising high and then almost diving.

What Adam saw happened quickly and close to him. One of the competing drones caught up with the queen, who had wheeled. She suddenly turned again and both insects zoomed. They met face-to-face, their bodies at right angles with the ground. It was as though they were about to sting each other. They clung with their forelegs as their bodies met. Then they plummeted to the ground together, still locked. There was a tiny "plop" as they fell, as though a toy balloon had been touched by the coal of a cigarette. Adam had followed the line of fall. He saw the queen struggling from the dying clasp of her lover. At length she freed herself from the tangle of legs. Adam saw the white thread that she trailed home; he knew that it represented life for many thousands of workers to come. Some minutes after the queen disappeared, Adam saw a worker bring the thread-like substance from the hive and get rid of it....Gross memories came to him. Again he saw Big Peter's reaching paws and the lust-drooping eyes....It was best not to think on such things. He turned away, feeling he had witnessed another example of sex in the rôle of destroyer.

A fellow trusty was waving to him from the administration building. "The Super wants to see you."

Chapter Four

ELLEN had come unexpectedly and after visiting hours. She appeared less calm than usual. The Superintendent also seemed perturbed. Adam wondered at their behavior, but he was thinking mostly of Captain Cascaden, who was looking from his departing car as Adam answered the summons to the front-office.

The Superintendent opened the door of an ante-room. "In here, Miss Gage." He motioned to Adam. "She has something to say to you, Brook." Major Richards returned to his desk as the door closed on Ellen and Adam, lifted the house telephone and called the supply clerk: "Get me the best outfit we've got. Wait a minute." He picked a card from the file. "Here. Thirty-four inch chest. Twenty-eight inch waist. Neck fourteen inches. Shoes size eight....See if you've got a good pair. Hat seven and three-quarters....Right?"

The voice of the clerk. "Right, sir."

Inside the room, Adam was examining a document. Ellen was saying: "It means you are free, Adam. Can't you understand? It's a pardon."

He stammered: "I can't figure it out. Yes, I hear what you say....Free! You said 'Free.'"

She nodded. "That's it. Aren't you happy?"

He plucked at his denim blouse as though convalescing from a fever and trying to peel away dead skin. He stood without seeming to know that the woman was in the room. His eyes looked through her, through the gray-calcimined wall...through the years.

He waved the pardon. "This is the Battle of Lodi," he said. "Napoleon stood at the Bridge of Lodi, the Tricolor in his hand." Ellen came nearer to put a hand on his shoulder. He paid no attention and she let her hand drop. He went on in a theatrical voice: "Lodi! It was the beginning. His star had risen." He looked at Ellen almost fiercely. "My star has risen."

"Yes, Adam."

"There is no time to be wasted. Time is the essence. I'll begin right away."

"Yes, right away, Adam, and I'll help."

He studied her absently. "Yes, that's right. I'll let you help me."

She felt a pang. The way he said he would "let" her help him fell short of the hope she had had that he... well, this sudden news no doubt had flustered him. Still, he might at least thank her, turning aside, for one courteous moment, from himself and this "star" that dominated his personal firmament. But he didn't thank her.

Perhaps he would go down on his knees to thank her if he were to know the months of investigation she had undergone, piecing together each ascertainable hour

of his life; spending days at an asylum, trying to get Big Peter's wife—again a widow—to tell what had happened. Trying to make the woman come away from the barred window from which she gazed vacantly and called constantly: "Supper'll be cold if you don't hurry."

Perhaps he would thank her if he were to know that she had begged the Governor again and again to issue the pardon; that finally she had felt compelled to tell the Governor of her love. That had been a hard thing to do. Never before had she given a man, any man, a thought. Nor, so far as she knew, had any man given her a thought—not even this man, for whom she had labored. He wasn't giving her a single thought. . . . He would *let* her help him.

She turned to the door and aroused Adam from Lodi. "We'll see Major Richards."

He started. "Do we leave right away?"

"The pardon is for tomorrow but the Major hinted he would violate rules, considering your record."

The Major looked up from some papers. He rose and gave Adam his hand. "Congratulations, Brook."

Adam shook hands and said nothing. The Major continued: "I'm glad for you, Brook, but I hate to see you go. So much is to be done. You'll be missed."

Adam spoke slowly. "If you think I did anything, you can prove it by promising never to say anything of me or my work. I am going to disappear and then reappear."

The supply clerk came in with a bundle. "Here you are, Major."

"Thanks. Put it in Brook's dormitory."

Adam watched the clerk disappear with the bundle. The Major turned again to Adam. "Brook, don't worry about your record being known. Maybe you should change your name?"

Adam's eyes blazed. "Change it for what? Do you think I want to admit I am an ex-convict, skulking about, hiding under an alias?"

The Major took him by the arm. "You are right." Then after a silence: "Say, Brook, I know you want to get out of here and I don't blame you. But I've got a proposition, a request."

"Well, sir?"

"It's this: suppose you take a week in..." he looked at Ellen, "well, in Dodge City, or wherever it is you are going. Then suppose you come back for two weeks to finish up this mountain of work. That is, to direct it as you have been doing. You see it sort of leaves me flat..."

Adam shook his head. "Sorry, sir, but I can't do it."

The Major scratched his head. "But here, Brook, I intend to pay you for the three weeks, including the... the vacation. It would give you a bit of money and it would be a whale of a help to me."

Adam was growing impatient. "I'll not stay here five minutes longer than I have to, Major, and that's final."

The Major, too, was losing his patience. "Don't you think you owe me something, seeing I have helped you along, giving you leeway, granting you privileges unusual for a..." The Major paused.

Adam was glaring. "Go ahead and say it. Go ahead and say 'a convict'!"

The Major came closer to Adam. "Silence! You can't get away with insubordination, not even at the last minute. Get that through your head!" He turned to Ellen. "Perhaps I'd better call a car, Miss Gage. You can catch the 8:40 train."

The Major sensed the question that was in her mind. He said: "I can't help it, Miss Gage. This is a place of discipline, even if I have coddled this inmate."

"I'd rather not go, Major."

"Well, you have a right to stay. I know that. I can't order you to go, nor would I, only I am going to give this fellow a taste of discipline. . . . Miss Gage, I am deeply sorry. I think you should leave the room."

She shook her head. "I can't leave."

The Major turned to Brook. "I was going to let you out tonight. You don't get out tonight, see! You don't get out until the day of your pardon, tomorrow. The choice of the hour is at my discretion. That hour will be sunset. To your dormitory, Brook, double-quick! On your way, Trusty."

The word burned into Brook's vitals. The punishment of extra hours he could stand. The word "trusty" he could not stand. The word, uttered before his only friend, Ellen Gage, set off the side of his brain where the loose pulleys were housed.

"Keep me here!" he roared. "But by God, I'll never turn one finger to help you. Let your barns go to the devil!" He leered. "And they will, for you don't know a stall from a storeroom. Let the honey go, and let the bees

die from foul-brood. What would you know about it? Let your acres peter out, and..."

The Major raised his hand as though to strike the inmate. From the tail of his eye he saw Ellen's white face. He lowered his fist and rang for an attendant, who answered immediately.

The Major pointed to Brook. "Take him to solitary."

The attendant grasped Brook's arm. "Come along."

The Major added: "Before you slap him in solitary, give him twenty."

"Twenty, sir. Right."

The door closed. There was a diminishing flurry of steps on the tiled floor, the distant grumbling of a lock and the slamming of a metal door.

The Major sat at his desk, his head on his hands. Then he spoke to Ellen, who had her back to him. She was standing, looking at the door through which Adam had gone. The Major saw her sides pulsing.

"I'm sorry, Miss Gage, but I must have discipline."

She turned. "You've sent him to the solitary cell?"

He nodded. "May I offer you my quarters for the night? You've missed the last train."

She took a chair near the desk. The Superintendent was writing with a stubborn pen. "For God's sake, Major, won't you countermand your order?"

He shook his head and continued writing. She seemed to recall something startling. "You said 'twenty'! You said, 'Give him twenty'!" She put her hand to her lips. "What was that? What did you mean, Major?"

He raised his eyes. "Let's forget it, Miss Gage. Suppose I show you to my quarters?"

She still had her hand to her lips. "What did you mean, 'Give him twenty'?"

He rose. "If you must know, it meant give him twenty stripes. Twenty of the cat-o'-nine tails."

She got up from her chair. "I demand you cancel your order."

"Miss Gage, I am running this outfit."

"I'll report you to the Governor. I'll tell him..."

He interrupted. "That is up to you, Miss Gage."

Ellen listened, but there was no sound coming from the far-away room where Adam Brook, bared to the waist, was shackled to the cell bars, receiving the twenty lashes.

WHILE waiting for the hours, the dark hours, to pass, Adam repeated passages from a Napoleonic book by Elie Faure that Ellen had given him the last Christmas.

A guard, at dawn, passing the small grill of the solitary cell-door, heard "that crazy Brook" reciting:

"'I believe that when he was sent to his prison, he regretted one thing only: the means to pursue and to attain the vision which was haunting him....He wanted time much more than space to be his. Space is so small. A man with a great mind ignores space. He is the contemporary of all men who have ever lived and of all men who will live hereafter.'"

Time... Space...

Chapter Five

IF Ellen wanted the Hon. Mr. Gage to help this protégé of hers, well, he would do it. He was again in funds, thanks to a client sent him by the Governor.

"Your Brook person may turn out like you say, Ellen. Then again, he might not. I don't know. However, I'm the last person to kick anyone that's down. I'll stake him to room and board until he gets set. What's he want to do?"

"We're figuring that out now."

"Well, you say he's good at figures."

During the winter, Adam and Ellen discussed all manner of schemes. Most of them would require considerable capital and were abandoned. She asked him if he wouldn't like to take charge of a large farm that her father was responsible for in connection with a late client's estate. Adam said he wouldn't.

"It's not that I don't feel the pull of the soil, Ellen. I guess I always will be interested in farming. Some day I'll have a farm, a model one. But not now. I think my future is in the world of industry."

Ellen's father was not a critical pot-shotter, but he asked if she didn't think it was time for her friend to get

a job. He had visited with Adam very little, finding him curiously reticent and actually dull in discussing robust things of life.

"Be patient a little longer, dad. We've got a scheme that I think will work out."

He was sceptical. "Yes? What?"

"Do you remember those Idaho & Eastern Railroad shares?"

He did remember. "What's he going to do? Smear 'em with molasses and sell 'em for fly-paper?"

"Adam says if you find the claim to the road clear we can junk it at a big profit."

The Hon. Mr. Gage snorted. "The hell he does! Well, let me tell you that the darned road lies through a remote stretch of country—that's one of the things wrong with it. Furthermore, with the cost of labor you'd be lucky to break even."

She pulled her father's coat-sleeve. "He has it all fixed for you to be our legal adviser."

"Then I advise you to quit right where you are."

"But would you do something for me?"

He nodded. "I usually do what you want."

She kissed him. "Then make sure that I have all the stock."

"Don't have to make sure. You got it all."

"Adam wants to get hold of plans, descriptions, invoices and specifications of the road, down to the last spike. Whether there is any rolling stock. Where the engines came from, what models..."

Mr. Gage raised his hand. "Whoa! Now what in hell?"

"He wants to know how much iron, steel, brass and other metals he can expect to salvage."

He thought a while. "There's a germ of an idea in it, but the big obstacle is labor."

"Adam has figured that out, too."

"How?"

"Well, he has shown me how we can use convict-labor."

Mr. Gage was perturbed. "That's overstepping the bounds a little; don't you think?"

She seemed uneasy. "Adam's mind is set on it; he has convinced me it is not unethical."

Mr. Gage pinched his lower lip. "Ellen, we all stretch a point in conduct now and then, but it's hardly sportsmanlike to . . . O, I don't know, but there's some element of fair play that's lacking in Brook. I can't just put my finger on it, but I hope you'll not be blind."

She colored. "Then you mean we can't expect any help from you?"

She rose and was about to leave the room. Her father followed her and put his hands on her shoulders. He looked deep down into her. Then he said softly, sadly: "You love this man."

Somehow she had avoided thinking of the word "love" since her pardon plea to the Governor. He, too, had been startled, mystified. He, too, had implied a warning as he promised to say nothing to Ellen's father about her confession. He had signed the pardon finally, saying: "I am

doing this against my better judgment. I hope you know what you, yourself, are doing."

Ellen replied to her father. "Yes, I do love him."

He held her close. "Does he know?"

She shook her head. "No, and I don't think he ever will." Then she collected herself. "But I am going to help him through to the end. He is encouraged by this plan. Please, dad, don't stand in the way. Help us."

After a silence, Mr. Gage said: "I can't do anything unethical, Ellen, and it's my duty to keep you from doing anything of that sort."

"Well, isn't there convict-labor in several States?"

"Yes, there is. But this is different."

"How is it so different? Adam says the convicts of Idaho get practically nothing, a few cents a day. We are offering them thirty cents and outdoor work."

"It's peonage, Ellen. I doubt if you get away with it."

"I already have had correspondence with the Idaho authorities."

"You mean you used your office as an entering wedge?"

"Why not? Aren't offices used everywhere? Have I done something criminal? What are we taking away from convicts when we offer them a chance to work outside? A chance to make a little money, and the State a chance to make money for their upkeep?"

Gage walked to a window. "Ellen, it isn't actually criminal. But I have always tried to preserve a certain code of sportsmanship.... Well, I suppose I must help.... My client has the data you want."

He sighed. "You'll need capital."

"I have saved two thousand dollars. We need about five hundred more."

He smiled with an almost mysterious curl of the lips. "I guess I can get it."

THE Hon. Mr. Gage delivered the record sought by Adam Brook. Adam pulled at his short nose and moved up and down the balls of his feet. "This is our big start, Ellen."

Ellen procured a mass of literature dealing with metals, with markets and railroads. Adam digested Interstate Commerce Commission reports, statistics and rulings. He called a "conference." It was attended by Ellen and her father, who arrived with his tongue planted in his cheek. But as Adam began to recite facts and figures from memory, the lawyer was impressed. He still had reservations as to Brook's sense of ethics, but now he did not find him dull. He recognized his ability to go directly to the heart of matters, shoving details aside with a power that was convincing.

"You should have been a lawyer, Brook."

Adam looked at the Hon. Mr. Gage.

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Chapter Six

THE uphill journey was hard. During the first three years there were successes, but there were defeats and setbacks, too. There were heavy-handed blows. Yet Adam roved with Ellen, her father and a growing crew, profiting by convict-labor in many States. Often they worked twenty hours at a time.... And as he began to gather and re-invest money in the tens of thousands, Adam's confidence in his destiny increased; his urge for power expanded. But mixed in with his growing urges was a longing to be a man of "class." As yet he did not know what to do in achieving an unassailable background. He was watchful, alert.

His "campaigns" took him to various States and cities, where he dismantled broken-down mills, bankrupt factories, defunct iron-works. During such campaigns he seemed wholly occupied. Between times, however, a spectral fear stalked him—a dual fear that his illegitimacy and his reformatory record would rise one day to damn him.

He magnified each untoward comment by representatives of organized labor. The unions had begun to attack his employment of convicts. He did not see the justice

of the labor leaders' claims—their criticisms surely were planned by unseen forces bent on persecuting him. Occasional newspaper articles referred to him as "The Junk King." This made him suspicious of nearly everyone. He became certain someone was plotting to ruin him through ridicule.

One day, when he had completed the wrecking of an old courthouse, and on terms regarded as a "steal" by a journal antagonistic to the administration of a western city, Adam read of himself as "Junkie" Brook. There was a cartoon showing the Mayor and himself winking and picking the pockets of a prostrate figure labeled "The City Treasury." The caption called the Mayor "Bunkie" and read: "Bunkie says farewell to Junkie."

Ellen tried to soothe him. "Don't let it worry you."

He was enraged. "It's libel! I'll sue."

Lawyer Gage advised him not to sue. "You wouldn't get anywhere, and you might start fireworks that would kick back."

Adam knew exactly what was meant by the words "kick back." His old record and his old life would come out. God! Was he to be followed all his days by the specter? Well, he must work, work. He must get, get. He must exhaust every agency, every resource—every man and woman whom he could use. Whenever anyone or anything, no matter who or what, got in the way of his destiny, he must be ruthless. He must rout opposition. Not even a pebble must remain in his way. He looked at Ellen and at her father. Even they would be let drop if they interfered. Did they expect sentimental loyalties? They looked

at him as though he owed them something. He owed them nothing. The girl had served and was serving him well. The old man wasn't any fire-brand. Too prone to joke during critical times. Another thing. These two were drawing down a percentage of the profits. They had been generously repaid. He was going to make other arrangements. He needed every ounce of energy, financial and otherwise, to attain his full power. Wealth would bring power. It couldn't miss. Look all about you. The men with the wealth have the power....

Now they were moving to Washington, there to make connections that would lead to great, massive things. Good-bye to little junk deals that brought the thousands. There would be big deals that meant hundreds of thousands; no doubt millions of dollars. Washington was the place to make connections. Leases were to be won there, and... Adam's black eyes envisioned himself nodding to Presidents.... And then New York, where already the war of man against Time and Space was becoming apparent in tall buildings, rapid transit, fast living and high climbing.... He fancied himself a general, moving first on one city and then on another; no one battle standing forth as a distinct entity, but rather all battles being component parts of one dazzling, lifetime fulfilment of destiny. And all the while, men would look up to him and respect him, saying "the great Brook"... But the specter! The past!

He called a porter to his stateroom and sent for Ellen. Back, far back in his mind, there was a voice that said she and her father had made him, Brook, possible. That's a lie! Only my fate makes me possible. Deep down inside

him there was a picture of Ellen giving him the Idaho & Eastern Railroad certificates, out of which he had made his first twenty thousand dollars. A false picture! Why, the papers were worthless without his application, his genius! Only *he* had seen what could be done.... And as for the grubstake, the two thousand dollars given by Ellen of her savings, and the old man's several hundred dollars, hadn't they been repaid many times over? What right had the old man to expect five per cent for legal advice? Too much! And Ellen certainly could not fancy herself worth ten per cent of the profits. There would have to be a re-arrangement, a new deal all 'round.... Adam Brook owed no man or no woman anything. He wore no collar but his own. His had been all the plan; his had been all the worries and risks. Ellen was in the stateroom now.

"I've been thinking, Ellen. Thinking of the offensive we are entering. It is self-evident that we will not turn a wheel for weeks, perhaps months."

She sat down. "Well, you have thought it all out and you decided to make contacts before expanding."

He nodded. "Right. Even so, time, as I often have said, is the essence. We have a war-chest, but we must re-trench."

She had no inkling of what was on his mind. "Will you lay your problem before me?"

He seemed relieved. "Yes. I was thinking that you and your father have been amply repaid...." His mind was having several debates within itself and he paused. "Your association with me has been profitable, don't you think, Ellen?"

"Why, yes." She hesitated. "Of course I never thought of it in that light, but..."

He raised his hand and spoke with finality. "I am glad you feel that way about it. Now what I want to do is this. Rather, I *must* do it to conserve my interests. I am going to put you on a weekly drawing account instead of the profit-sharing basis."

"Well, Adam..." The proposition had been broached in an unblinking, matter-of-course way. "I suppose you know best, Adam."

"Later I shall make an arrangement with your father," he said, as though it were a closed incident; as if her surrender had been a matter of routine. "And now for big game. It will be exciting, Ellen.... Say, has your father been drinking lately?"

She replied mechanically, still thinking of the arbitrary manner in which she had been relegated to a salary. "No, he hasn't touched a drop for several years."

"Then I can't understand. He's got to snap out of it, Ellen."

For a moment there was a bit of fire in her voice. "What do you mean by that?"

"Your father doesn't seem to have his feet on the ground. Perhaps you'd better warn him that I expect dignified results in our Washington campaign."

Ellen went to her father and pretended to be in good spirits. She was unable to fool him. After cross-examination, he learned most of the conversation that had passed. He recalled his last clash with Adam. Brook had decided to change the name of "Brook Enterprises" to "Brook Utilities,

Inc." Gage had said: "But we haven't any utilities." Adam had frowned. "You heard what I decided."

Gage took his daughter's hand. He whispered: "Do you still love him?"

She nodded, but there was a tightness about her eyes, as though she had been closing them often to shut out Brook's ruthlessness. She said nothing and her father spat out: "Well, then, I don't envy you. He may be a wizard in business, but he is clearly lacking in gratitude. He is self-centered. He is due all his life to be warped and miserable."

Ellen shook her head. "Do you wonder? Do you wonder why he seems warped at times? Good God! Wouldn't you or I or anyone else be resentful if we came into a world that had nothing but kicks?"

The Hon. Mr. Gage snickered. "So he's giving you a salary? For what? Did you kick him? No! By God, you and I made him! And he isn't going to get away with that."

She was upset. "Don't say a word to him."

"The hell I won't!"

He started from his seat in their compartment. She got up and barred the way. "If you say or do one thing about this, I'll never speak to you again. You asked me if I love him? I do. I always will. Some day he may understand. Maybe not. No matter. I love him. Now you keep out!"

She stamped her foot. Her father sat down and patted his knees.

PART THREE

Chapter One

IT was the year 1922, and no longer was he "Junkie" Brook and no longer was he in the provinces. He had become a gentleman with money enough—more than enough—to give himself those evidences of "class" that he had visioned so fervently. A forty-story building in Pine Street testified to the genius that had driven him through the war years, during which he had manufactured anchors for the United States Shipping Board; bayonets for Russia, helmets for France, gun-carriage parts for Italy. In his coat-lapel reposed the red ribbon of the Legion of Honor. On the lists of the opera, his name appeared as a patron. He was a horseman of parts.

He was not "Junkie" Brook now. In fact he had been called "The Boy Wizard of War Industry" while he was getting his dollar a year—and a few dollars more here and there.

He had invented his mother, as was described in the beginning of the Brook chronicle. Ellen Gage, almost fanatically loyal, worked beside him. She was his right elbow, his mentor, his confidante. She coached him socially. She even tried to teach him to play the piano. But it was

no use. He had two left hands, and despite his frequent asseverations that he was "musical," he seemed tone-deaf. To carry through his musical pose, however, he had a pipe-organ installed in his pent-house, *Brook Towers*, believed to be the first truly pretentious dwelling of its kind in the Greater City. When his hired organist offered an opinion that Napoleon's only musical knowledge was gained from the bass voices of cannon, he was dismissed. Brook had a player-attachment put on the organ, and it was not uncommon for him to rise during a social evening, go to the console and render the "*Marseillaise*."

Layer on layer, he built an edifice of culture. By virtue of his truly startling memory, he could repeat any number of operatic translations. Unwilling to read novels or works of pure literature, he nevertheless memorized book-reviews and thereby gained a reputation for being abreast of the times. He also read the encyclopedia and art criticisms and began to assemble Napoleonic treasures. For a time he was about to go in for collecting textiles of the American Indian, but a deal in Navajo blankets soured him. He had discovered that several pieces, sold him as ceremonial rugs, had been manufactured by a New Haven Armenian. His pent-house bulged with unread rare books.

Lacking other forms of dissipation, he tended more and more to develop a passion for the table, as was betrayed by a growing melon beneath his waistcoat.

He now had a model farm in Illinois, disregarding the fact that his real mother had come to grief in that State, and he gloated to think that it was a self-sustaining

institution. His horses, named after Napoleon's marshals, and his cows, called after women who knew the Emperor, won many prizes. His bees, of thrice-tested Italian queens, were known to the world of bee-culture. His grain, perfected for seed-purposes only, and distributed among agricultural schools with appropriate publicity, had gained him a place as adviser on farm relief to the President. He was a member of several of the finest clubs. He soon would own a yacht but eschewed airplanes. And on nearly everything he owned was his monogram and his symbol, a blue anchor with a gold "B" superimposed.

The anchor was woven in his office carpets. He wore a gilt anchor on his watch-chain. The watch-case itself had the anchor motif. And at the funeral of a prominent person one always could tell who had sent that huge anchor of yellow blossoms bearing the highly inappropriate letter "B" in blue blooms.

In his offices there was the "parent-anchor" which was, in a manner of speaking, the sire of all the motley anchors that appeared on the Brook silver-ware and dinner-plate, on his limousine doors, stationery, and even in the leaden traceries of church windows that he now was giving so lavishly as memorials for his drowned "father." The parent-anchor, a bit rusty and incongruous, stood in the Brook offices in Pine Street and on a pedestal of hardwood. It was a souvenir. It was the first anchor made by him for the Shipping Board. It once was slung at the starboard bow of the *U.S.S. Chingachook*, a noble vessel that had not waited for a German torpedo to send her to the bottom, but which sank more or less gracefully and of her

own accord off Sandy Hook on her maiden voyage. The anchor had been salvaged by the Navy Department and sent to Brook as a token of his country's esteem for his promptitude in deliveries....

He was "Junkie" Brook no longer.

The specter of the past leered less frequently at him. The old evidences of his genuine history had more or less fallen away. True, he had occasional qualms, such as the time he had exerted himself to keep Captain Cascaden, later Major, from going overseas. He simply could not resist an urge to settle old scores when he heard of the Captain's promotion. The years fell away like flesh from dead bones. Again he heard the Major (then Captain) laugh during the reform school visit. Again he heard him ask Major Richards: "Is that one of the mental cases?" Well, by God! He had seen that the Major was held to home-soil during the war. But in so doing, he had all but exposed himself.

Then there was old dead-wood Gage. What if he *was* Ellen's father? Did that mean that Brook should have kept him on in a responsible place? He didn't like to think back to that episode.

The Lincolnesque man had been summoned to Brook's office. The Hon. Mr. Gage was stooped over with pain and his step was laggard. He smiled, however, as he took a seat beside Brook's desk, on which there was an iron-apple paperweight given Brook by the Italian Ambassador. Lawyer Gage waited for Brook to quit playing with the iron apple and to say his mind.

Finally—Adam was verging on one of his loose-pulley

expeditions—the older man broke silence. “Well, Adam, things are getting bigger and better for you.”

Adam ignored the comment. Then he spoke in his usual abstract manner when about to announce something of import. “Mr. Gage, I have decided that your health no longer permits me to call on you to handle the increasingly complicated legal affairs of my company.”

The older man started. He knew the symptoms. He was through. The mouth of the sack was being stretched for him. Damn it all! Damn the way this whippersnapper said the words “his company.” Everything was *his*, always had been *his*, always would be *his*! The old man’s brain began to formulate crazy little rhymes. His! His! His! I’d like to punch his phiz.... Even my daughter is his, not in body but in soul, and he doesn’t appreciate it. My own little girl, my plain, sweet, little girl.... He said aloud: “I’m getting better, Adam. I can carry on.”

Brook shook his head. “Every man must step aside some time, Congressman.” He never called Mr. Gage “Congressman” unless he was annoyed. How well Gage knew that!

It was hard to realize that one was done with the wheels of work. The older man drew out a handkerchief somewhat tardily to smother the cough that had been his for months. “I’m better off working than I would be idle, Adam. We can expand the staff and...”

“No, I have made other arrangements. You can resume your private practice if you really think you are fit.”

How smugly this man dismissed the life-time work of another! With what indifference he advised him, the

Hon. George W. Gage, the friend of governors, the man who had appeared with honor before the Supreme Court of the United States, what to do with the few years that might remain to him!

The old man bowed. "You mean I...I am through? That I..."

Adam pulled at his short nose. He hated such scenes. They were maudlin and obstructive. Would J. P. Morgan allow sentimental bosh to impede action? Well, the Napoleonic Brook was as capable as ten Morgans.

"I appreciate your work, Mr. Gage. But we have run into a maze of difficulties. There are the oil leases, the titles of which are in a muddled condition. Millions are at stake. I do not mean to reflect on your proven abilities, but a man of broad practice and prestige is needed. Time is the essence, and to govern is to foresee. I have engaged Judge Jonathan Webb, whose work as a corporation lawyer is internationally known."

The Hon. Mr. Gage seemed free of pain for the moment. His old-time humor responded like a retired fire-horse hearing a bell. "Yes, I have heard of Webb. His whiskers are famous."

Adam Brook's eyes blazed, although his straight, thin lips moved with the precision of scissors-blades. First this superannuated loon had grown maudlin; now he was playing the buffoon, poking fun at an eminent counsellor's beard. It was too much!

Brook leaned across the table. "Your trouble now and always, Congressman, has been your flippant manner. Several times I have been on the point of speaking to you

about it. During the hearings in our very first case, the Idaho & Eastern, and when everything depended on our getting cheap labor, you jeopardized me. When the legislative committee asked me if the hiring of convict-labor was not a condition of peonage, you interjected tactless jokes, saying among other things that politics had made peons of us all...."

"But we won out, Adam."

"Yes... I won out."

The Hon. Mr. Gage rose and shook away the stoop from his gaunt shoulders, as though letting fall a great burden. "Damn you, sir! You know my brains and my daughter's skill made the convict-labor possible. You don't dare deny it! You forget that the Idaho & Eastern certificates belonged first to me and then to my daughter. You forget—or do you, now?—that my daughter and I made you. Yes, made you! Picked you out of the..."

Adam got up, placed a tapering middle finger on a buzzer. Ellen Gage came in. He turned to her: "Ellen, your father has just given me his resignation. I have been unable to induce him to re-consider."

Ellen looked keenly at the old man. His shoulders again were drooped. "I'm sorry to hear this, father."

He walked slowly to the door. Then he turned and managed to smile: "I've been junked."

That was history. Gage had gone home and had died. The Governor who pardoned Adam had died. Death! He hated to think of it. He could not think of it as happening to him, Adam Brook. Always, when it happened to another he sent his anchor floral piece (if the corpse had been

prominent enough) and had the feeling that death had taken *that* man in the bronze casket—certainly it had not taken Brook. And death had been friendly, too, in removing so many of those that knew of the past. I'll rub you entirely out of my dreams, specter.... He was no longer "Junkie" Brook. He was "The Little Napoleon of Pine Street," and he was a gentleman that rode a fine stallion in Central Park.

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Chapter Two

was a gentleman that rode a fine stallion in Central Park.

It was while he attended the twentieth renewal of the *Meadowbrook Cup*—America's oldest amateur steeplechase—at Westbury, Long Island, that Brook first saw his way clear to becoming a man on horseback in actual fact as well as in his mind's eye. He had long desired to take his place among noted men of money who keep themselves—as they deem it—hard and fit by equestrian exercise on the bridle paths of Central Park. He had been deterred by the accident of his own physical conformation. He believed that with his short legs he would be a ludicrous figure in the saddle. He remained on the ground and there came to him a poignant memory of days when he went to the rural school astride his sorrel mare. What had become of her?

At Westbury, on *Meadowbrook Cup Day*, and while the field was parading to the post, he was virtually lifted into the saddle by a chance conversation behind him. Two strangers were discussing the "forward seat" in steeplechasing, which is to say the seat with short stirrups. It was

first imported to England by the famous Tod Sloan and there modified to cross-country racing by English riding men.

The discussion behind him was intensely technical. Its finer points were wasted on him. But, with America's equestrian order moving colorfully before him to sharpen his sensibilities, Brook was quick to catch its general import. He adapted the sense of it to his own especial needs. In a flash he saw himself in the park, "riding forward"—the short stirrup-leathers disguising nature's lack of leg-length and converting it into an asset. The unknowing, afoot or mounted, who might—who certainly would—observe him, would notice merely that his riding form was modern and smart. To the horsewise, the inference would be irresistible that Brook, the great financier, had been a break-neck man through the field in his earlier and less responsible days.

To think was to act with Brook. That evening at home he sent for Mr. Noble J. Nimms, his investigator, public relations counsel and principal yes-man.

"Nimms, you are commissioned to get me a horse. Not *any* horse, but one with a spirit to match mine. A horse of presence, and . . ." he selected a roll of canned music for his player-organ and adjusted it. "And, Nimms, it must be an *entire* horse. A stallion."

Nimms, the yes-man, took the commission with outward enthusiasm but with profound interior alarm. Unhappily, Nimms was a horseman and therefore looked upon his chief as inadequate for bridle bravado. However, Nimms was a man of resource. Hadn't he been equal to

rifling City archives when it became necessary to know where the Hudson Bridge was to be built? Hadn't he saved The Little Napoleon from indictment in that oil lease business by issuing tons of propaganda?

Nimms gave his problem twenty-four hours of thought. He happened to know that Cascaden, now a Colonel, was for one reason or another taboo with the Chief. Yet, rack himself as he might, Cascaden was the one man to help him. Nimms decided on a bold but highly secret move. He would place the matter, in the strictest confidence of course, in the hands of Colonel Cascaden of Washington.

Nimms didn't know it and Brook never learned it, but when Nimms took this problem to Cascaden, it brightened the Colonel's approaching old age and gave him the opportunity to put across the practical joke of his life.

Colonel Cascaden, of the cavalry, sir, for years had wondered at his fate. He had been on the retired list when the war broke out, and on re-entering active duty had been commissioned a Major, and then—damn it all, sir—he had been placed in charge of the remount service instead of sailing to France. This had dumbfounded him. Twice during the year and a half while war existed for America, Cascaden had learned that an Adam Brook had interfered with his being sent overseas. Who was this meddling Brook? He did not know. He did not remember the time he had visited his friend, Major Richards, at the reform school; the time he had heard a large-headed inmate reciting a list of words beginning with "M." But now the name Brook stuck in his military craw. He saw pictures of

the man in the newspapers. He couldn't account for a hazy feeling that he had seen this Brook before.

With the choicest of food and drink on the side, Nimms went into conference with Colonel Cascaden at a Washington club. He put to the Colonel capably and deftly the proposition that Adam Brook—he was "A.B." to his army of yes-men—must have a horse to ride.

"Look you, Colonel, A.B. must have an adequate horse; a horse bred in the purple."

The Colonel sipped an illegal rum toddy. "I see, Nimms. He must have a horse that fills the eye and imagination."

"Right, Colonel. A horse seemingly bursting with mettle, but..."

The Colonel let little pools of the toddy linger on his tongue. Then he said: "Yes, and still it must be a horse as safe as an upholstered pew in a Fifth Avenue church?"

Nimms played with the dinner-check. "Colonel, we understand each other perfectly."

The Colonel glowed with rum and revenge. "My boy, you came to the right party. We shall have recourse to the stud book and to one of the most curious horse-family histories to be found in its many pages."

"I am all attention, Colonel. Shall we have another toddy?"

"By all means. And another after that.... Well, there occurs in the stud book the name of the race horse, Fitzherbert."

"I know of him. He was sent to France by August Belmont for service as a stallion."

"Exactly. And at about the time that racing fell under the ban in New York and was discontinued for two years."

"Fitzherbert made a great name as a three-year-old."

The Colonel grasped the fresh toddy. "And also as a four-year-old, if you remember. Well, Fitzherbert was by Ethelbert, who was a brother to Requital, the pair being by the imported horse, Eothen, he by Hampton. Now listen! Eothen, because of founder incurred during the overseas voyage was never raced. And as a sire he never got but two horses of class, Ethelbert and Requital, as I have said."

Nimms himself was stirred by the toddies and began to interject his own knowledge of racing. "Yes, Colonel, but Requital was a great horse."

"I have said as much, but he was negligible as a getter of foals. And Ethelbert never got but two good ones, Fitzherbert and Dalmatian. Now Dalmatian was exported to France at about the same time as Fitzherbert, and was in his turn unimpressive, while Fitzherbert..."

But let us leave the Washington Club and go forward some months. Let us have the Colonel, properly spiced by drink, give the story of the stallion, Raconteur, the horse that went to Brook. He has told the story over and over again to brother cavalrymen, when ice has been clinking, and it is a story beloved all through the army.

"Raconteur, sir," the Colonel speaking. "Raconteur, a picture horse by the American Fitzherbert out of the French mare, Vivandière. A present to this government by the French government, to stand in the army remount. A child can ride him, my dear chap, but no one has dared tell

Adam Brook that. Nor would the general public, seeing the horse in Central Park, suspect that it is gentle.

"Raconteur, sir, carries a crest like a cockatoo and appears to breathe fire. Fitzherbert who got him was foaled by the mare, Morganatic, who was by Emperor. Mark that well, old fellow. When A.B. heard the words 'Emperor' and 'Morganatic,' he almost blew up with desire for Raconteur."

At this point there would be more clinking of ice and a refilling of glasses while the Colonel continued: "What a flowing topline has Raconteur! How proudly he carries his flag! How beautifully his shoulder is laid, and his dark chestnut color, with its purple tinge...yes, purple when the light is just so...well, the horse wasn't sold by the Army to Adam Brook. By God, sir; it was *given* him as a token of his 'wonderful' work during the war."

Here the Colonel would smite his palms together. "Pictures of Brook and Raconteur appeared in the roto-gravure sections. What no newspaper stated and what I never tell outside the Army is that Raconteur as a sire was the least impressive in a more than doubtful sire-line. In fact, of the various mares brought to his court, and presented, sir, to his embrace, he found interest in not even one! Whether the voyage overseas robbed Raconteur of desire or he was born completely indifferent, who of us is to say? The remount vets stoked him with special food and medicated him inwardly and outwardly, but there was nothing to him at all but his impressive appearance."

And again the clinking of glasses and spouting of siphons as Colonel Cascaden came to the punch of his story.

“Raconteur! Full of fire and beautiful to look at beneath the crop of his great master, Adam Brook! Sir, Raconteur talks to the brood-mares—that’s all!” A chuckle while the good Colonel dug a brother cavalryman in the ribs. “Do you catch the drift? Raconteur talks to them. He tells them fairy stories!”

Colonel Cascaden learned to love the joke so well that once he went to New York (in his cups, of course) for the express purpose of seeing Brook ride Raconteur in the park.

The Colonel had luncheon at a good club and with good cronies and spent the hours of the afternoon between two and five at another club. He was more than mellow when he reached the park plaza in a taxicab. He was just in time to see Raconteur led over from the Riding Club by two grooms. The horse was clothed to the heels, his neck was arched like a Japanese bridge, and his nostrils dilated to display the blood-red tissue within.

Brook’s limousine, timed to the second, rolled up to the mounting block as Raconteur was brought athwart it. To the eye, and for the moment before Brook was in the saddle, Raconteur surged with presumable fire as he struck at the gravel with first one forefoot and then the other. His back was bowed and his whole skin quivered as he felt his master’s weight. He snorted. Then, flinging his head high as Brook gathered the reins and the pair of grooms let go, he seemed to tell the world that his master and his master alone was in charge; that his master alone could tame him. It was as though Raconteur realized it would be futile to rebel with one aboard who was master horseman and master of men as well. He came to hand

proudly but definitely, standing like a beautiful statue until Brook, with a word, indicated to Raconteur that he would let him know, with another word, when the ride might be commenced.

The taxi-chauffeur, who was a Sunday newspaper addict, turned in his place and spoke to the Colonel: "Them two you just seen was Mr. Brook, the fenanseer, and Racketeer, the famous French stud hoss. I understand that Mr. Brook is the only guy alive that can ride Racketeer."

The Colonel's cheeks, pink with liquor and near-apoplexy, radiated good humor. "He talks to them," he informed the wondering chauffeur happily. "He tells them fairy stories. He's all there, and yet he isn't there at all—believe it or not, my boy. He talks to them, and even in France, where the little children speak French, too, they named him Raconteur."

Whereupon the chauffeur, who never had been in France, said: "I don't getcha, boss." The Colonel reached with his cane and stuck the chauffeur playfully in the back, mumbling, "He talks to them!" The chauffeur was glad to find a break in traffic that meant hasty disposition of his nutty fare.

At the club, and while fumbling among current magazines, the Colonel found one which specialized in snobbery and the more polite sports. That week, the magazine featured a full-page photograph of Adam Brook riding Raconteur in Central Park. The picture showed rider and horse in side elevation, with Brook poised just behind the horse's withers and the stirrup leathers short—his position

a faithful representation of the "forward seat" he had heard described at the *Meadowbrook Cup* at Westbury.

Beneath the picture a caption read:

"Adam Brook, the oil magnate and famous music patron, mounted on the French thoroughbred stallion, *Raconteur*, presented to him by the United States Government for his services during the World War. Mr. Brook is the only park-rider we know whose horsemanship is good enough to permit his riding an entire horse in Central Park."

Chapter Three

LADAM BROOK was thirty-nine years old—thirty-eight by his own computation—before he began to think seriously of propagating his species. Until now he had thought only of getting—never of *be*getting. He may have had occasional impulses that swam stark naked in his subconscious, but by the time they had risen to the conscious, they were fully clad, respectable and non-disturbing.

Such sexual urges as may have been generated in The Little Napoleon had become fused with his vanity or dissipated in work. Certainly they never had emerged as expressions of desire. All he had known of sex was by observation and by hearsay; first on the boyhood farm and later at the reform school. The picture was an ugly one. He would have none of it. And whenever fellow financiers toppled in the good old Airedale manner, Brook pulled his short nose and associated his own chastity with his own success. . . . Sex was just a big noise that came from a drum, played by the devil inside one's skull.

Unhappy? What more could he ask of life? True, the growing melon beneath his waistcoat annoyed him and Dr. Corbett had ordered him to give up certain foods, par-

ticularly those raw pears that he liked to fondle and to bite into. He had lost two teeth as middle-age scored its first punch to the jaw. Were these little evidences of mortality the sources of unhappiness? ... Inner voices kept murmuring: "You are unhappy. You are unhappy, because you are incomplete."

Incomplete? How stupid! Look at the things he owned, at the things he had done and was doing! Right now he was hailed by Mr. Toastmaster as a civic benefactor. Mr. Toastmaster had recounted at a Chamber of Commerce Banquet how Citizen Brook had designed and built a nucleus for *Brook Medical Center* on Riverside Drive. Three million dollars right there. And in return, the clapping of hands when Mr. Toastmaster said: "Gentlemen, I give you Adam Brook, civic benefactor."

The drum beats were louder. Not only that, but the Devil had added a set of cymbals and played them mockingly.... Please give me back my loose-pulleys, Herr Devil. The tinkling and the crashing of brass makes me remember "Junkie."...

His name was on many things. Always his name on things. Brook Utilities, Incorporated, now going heavily into oils. What if the Oklahoma leases were clouded in title? *Brookol* was a corking good gasoline. The name was on the model farm that he had established in Illinois—*Brookfield*, with its two thousand acres of scientifically cultured loam. *Brookfield*, with its blooded draft-horses, the sires named for Napoleon's marshals; and the prize-winning cows called after women who had known the Emperor. *Brookfield*, with its great apiaries, its thrice-tested

and specially selected Italian queens. He had been appointed by the President of the United States to a place on the advisory farm board. Unhappy? Certainly not.... Day after day the voices rose and the drum-beats tap-danced in his skull. And now the Devil, dissatisfied, had added a xylophone and a triangle to the list of traps.... You are unhappy. Rub-a-dub. Slam. Tinkle-tinkle. Bong.

Did it make a man unhappy to buy a sprawling estate in Westbury, where the *Social Register* had so many subscribers? There were a million and a half dollars tied up in that estate. And at the lodge gate the name "*Bonnybrook*." Always his name on things. Why, O why couldn't he get his name into that darned *Social Register*? What must a man do?

A yacht was building for him in Scotland. It would be the last word and would cost a million. Its name would be "*Brookease*." His private railroad car was "*Straybrook*." ... But you are unhappy, incomplete. Your name is on all these things, on the *Brook Utilities Building* and on *Brook Towers*, but there is no human thing that bears your name besides yourself.... Adam shuddered and looked at the death mask of Napoleon on his blue-velveted office wall. That man, too, had wanted an heir.... The drums beat, the cymbals clashed, the xylophone chattered, the triangle tingled and the Devil tried out a new instrument that he had moved in, a great Chinese gong. What a noise it made, trembling through all the glands! Tomorrow the Devil would bring in a tom-tom and a pair of kettle-drums....

He must escape those voices. He must silence that

battery of clap-traps that Herr Devil pounded. . . . He found himself doing the unprecedented thing of asking others for their opinions regarding himself. His valet, Cocker, was massaging his master after the gallop on Raconteur. Cocker's fingers were kneading Brook's belly-tissues and Cocker's eyes were contemplating the master's navel and marveling at the democracy of nakedness when he thought he heard these extraordinary words:

"Cocker, do you think me an unhappy man?"

Cocker fancied his ears mistaken. "I beg pardon, sir?" He allowed a handful of rubbing alcohol to cascade down the master's groin. "Did you speak, sir?"

Smarting from the misdirected fluid, Brook sprang from the rubbing-slab and executed an impromptu *taran-tella*. Finally, and after soothing ointments had been applied, he snapped out:

"Bring me my shorts, damn it!"

In his office and after a member of the Anti-Saloon League had called for the customary contribution to the cause, Brook turned to Ellen.

"Do you think I am unhappy, Ellen?"

Her eyes widened. "Of course not." She studied him and added: "Don't you think you have stayed too close to your work lately?"

He roared: "Work never killed anyone. . . . Now let's get out an answer to the President's request for data on wheat."

Judge Webb came in to confer regarding the Oklahoma oil leases. He said the titles obviously were clouded.

Something drastic must be done to protect *Brookhol*. Adam asked:

"Judge, do you think me unhappy?"

Judge Webb's false teeth wobbled. "Hell, no! Why should you be?" Then, somewhat annoyed: "There's bound to be litigation over the leases sooner or later, A.B., and we must be ready..."

Adam interrupted: "Then you really don't think me unhappy?"

The Judge felt in need of a drink. "Are you ill, A.B.?" Lacking a reply from Brook, who sat looking at the death mask of Napoleon, the Judge brought up an old subject. "When are you going to dictate that will?"

Adam returned to earth. "A will? What for at this time?"

"My God, A.B.! We're human. We all have to die. Our lease on life is even more unsubstantial than your leases on the Oklahoma fields. What if you get married? What if there is a child? You must provide for the future and..."

Adam was fondling the iron apple on his desk. "You're right, Judge. I am unhappy. I'm incomplete."

The Judge was glad indeed when he returned to his own suite and found a pint of liquor that a bootlegger had insisted was Overholt.

Pierpont Jones, III, Brook's General Manager, came in to ask a favor. Before he could begin, Brook asked: "Do I look unhappy, Jones?" Pierpont Jones mumbled an "of course not," tapped his teeth with a silver pencil, forgot what he had come to request and retreated in a daze to his

office. He shook his head, sighed and then telephoned the madam of a "call-house."

"Hello. This is Mr. Jones. Have Bertha ready for me at six o'clock."

Chapter Four

[*STRIDE* Raconteur, Brook cantered in Central Park. The park policemen, their faces reflecting the spring sun, saluted as A.B. rumbled past. Today the traps of Herr Devil were not so uproarious; still, the mad musician of hell had added some castanets, which he wore on his tail, and a pair of foolscap bells that tipped his horns.

Adam Brook was wound up in thought, as was evident when he failed to cast his customary glance at the mansions of Frick and Carnegie. Marriage. But to whom? If at all, it must be a marriage of state. A marriage of importance. Someone that was firmly typed in the *Social Register*. There must be no Empress Josephine left on his hands.

Suddenly, the usually dependable Raconteur gave a jounce that almost unseated the meditating A.B. His "forward seat" was disturbed no little. A park policeman, knowing full well what an "entire horse" might do when riled, sprang from the turf-border and grasped Raconteur's bridle-bits.

Adam Brook shouted to the officer. "Let go! I can handle him."

The officer then raised his hand, stopping the progress

of a boy of five or six years, who was laughing right hoarsely and kicking the sides of a calico pony. Adam soothed the plunging Raconteur. He turned to see the laughing boy, who was hiding something in his reefer. Adam saw a smartly mounted woman ride up to the policeman on a gray gelding. She was clad in a tan riding coat, a soft tan hat and fawn-colored jodhpurs that emphasized her symmetry of limb.

The young woman addressed the officer. "Let go of the pony's reins instantly."

The officer demurred. "But, lady, this kid..."

"Let go this minute. Do you hear?"

The officer held up a bean-shooter which he had taken from the boy, who now was howling like six motherless wolf cubs. "But he shot this at Mr. Brook's horse. I seen him do it!"

The young woman, who was startlingly fair of face, and very self-possessed, dismounted and said: "If there was a man here, you wouldn't dare pick on this child." She turned for a flashing moment and looked with such appeal at Adam that he was jounced more soundly than he had been when the pebble from the bean-shooter plopped against Raconteur's celibate rump. He got down and said to the policeman: "It's all right, officer. The lad was just playing."

The officer saluted, handed the bean-shooter to A.B. and walked towards the zoo.

Brook stood there clumsily. The young woman with the amazingly fair face and picture-book eyes of blue-gray smiled at him. All the drum-traps of Herr Devil crashed

to the floor of A.B.'s skull with the clatter of tin-cans. He endeavored to smile as he restored the bean-shooter to its owner.

"Thank you so much, Mr. Brook," the young woman said. His vanity was tickled with a thousand feathers as she spoke his name. However, he was justly well known. He watched the wind play with rings of cornsilk hair that peeped beneath the brim of the young woman's hat. "I am Enid Olds," she said. "Perhaps you remember my father, Courtney J. Olds. He called on you not long ago."

"Yes, indeed, Miss Olds. I remember him quite distinctly. A very fine man, indeed. How is the expedition he is heading to Tahiti?"

She laughed. "He's not heading it, Mr. Brook. He *is* the expedition. Father's a jolly sort..." She turned to the boy, indicating by a lift of the brow that he mustn't stick out his tongue, even if Mr. Brook's back was turned. "This is Archie, my baby brother."

Brook wasn't so keen about Archie. "Why, hello, little man..."

"Little man yourself!" Archie said, with devastating frankness.

Enid noted the pained look on Brook's brow. "Please excuse Archie. He's utterly spoiled by Father. Now say you're sorry, Archie."

Archie couldn't say anything for the moment, which was perhaps as well. He began to cough violently. This alarmed his sister, who hastened to put her arm about him and to press her handkerchief to his mouth. Brook moved

close to Archie as though to investigate how such rousing coughs could emanate from so small a rascal. Mr. Brook caught a blast squarely in the face. A bursting fire-hose could not have caused him more discomfiture.

"I must get Archie home," Enid said. "He's got whooping cough and I take him out for the air on warm days."

"Could I be of assistance?"

She smiled again. What even, white teeth she had! And what poise! A.B. guessed she was not more than twenty-three or twenty-four. Quite a discrepancy between her age and that of the little, coughing imp. He felt inexplicably happy that they were brother and sister, instead of mother and son, as he had at first believed.

"It's awfully good of you," Enid said, "but we'll trot along by ourselves."

Brook assisted her with a hand at the stirrup, but his aid was superfluous. She swept into the leather with the grace of a winged one. Then she moved along with Archie, reining in her gray so that the pony could match pace. Brook could hear Archie whooping it up while sparrows rose in alarm. Brook stood there nodding. His lids were half-closed over his big black eyes. He was saying inside himself: "I am incomplete. She would make me complete. I wonder..."

ELLEN GAGE received a telephone call over the private wire. "A.B. speaking. Tell Noble Nimms to get on the wire. Say, Ellen, do you recall a man named Courtney J. Olds?"

A pause. "Wasn't he the huge fellow with the pointed moustaches that tried to get you to subscribe to something or other?"

"Yes. And I had you get rid of him in a hurry. Something about an expedition to Tahiti."

"Oh, yes. Now I remember, Adam. He tried to get me to interest you in his work. Said he was an undersea painter."

"A what?"

"An undersea painter. He paints pictures while wearing a diver's suit at a depth—I think he said forty or fifty feet under water. Just another crazy person that I kept from bothering you too much."

Ellen was surprised to hear Adam reply: "Now just a moment, Ellen. The man might have a great idea. I want to see some of his pictures. Did he leave an address?"

"I'll look it up. . . . Here's Nimms."

"Yes, A.B., how was your ride today?"

Adam spoke rapidly. "Never mind the ride. I want you to look up a man named Courtney J. Olds."

"Oaks?"

"No. Olds. O-l-d-s. O, as in oyster, L, as in lobster . . ."

"I have it. Olds. Yes, sir."

"See who he is, what he has been. All about him. Maybe he has a daughter. If so, all about her. Make it fast, short and comprehensive. . . . Oh, yes. This Courtney, I hear, paints pictures under the water. . . ."

"I beg pardon, A.B., I didn't get the last."

"What's the matter with your ears, Nimms? I thought you were an old Harvard man."

"I am, A.B., but it sounded as though you said the man 'painted under water.'"

"Well, damn it all, that's what I did say! . . . Look him up and call me at my apartment. I'll be waiting."

Godchaux, Cocker, the housekeeper and other servants wondered why the master walked up and down so swiftly in the library. Within the hour, Nimms was on the wire. Godchaux held the receiver for the master, whose ears fried with impatience.

"Here's the report, A.B."

"Let's have it, Nimms."

"First off, they are in the *Social Register* . . ."

Why hadn't Brook thought to look in the *Register* himself? Still, one doesn't associate snooty personages with divers in Tahiti. Brook breathed so huskily that Nimms fancied they had a poor connection.

"Proceed, Nimms."

"Briefly, Courtney Olds is a third son of the current Colonial Olds clan. You must know of them, A.B., being from Boston yourself." Nimms, on his end of the wire, of course could not see his chief wince. "Why, they go so far back that . . ."

"Come to the point, Nimms."

"Well, the family has risen high socially but the money isn't so plentiful. Courtney Olds has a fine education and at times has done some scientific stuff. Weighed the earth or something. Presented, or helped present, Admiral Peary's data to the Geographical Society. Or maybe it was to Congress."

"See here, Nimms, be more definite. No guesswork."

"I'm not guessing. In later years Olds... Oh, yes. He has a daughter who is said to be the most beautiful thing in society. But she is like her father, in that she'd rather go in for sports. She plays all manner of games like a champion. Rides to hounds. Flirts a lot..."

"By God, Nimms, quit this gossipy rot and give me facts!"

Nimms' voice was shaky. "Sorry, A.B. I got everything I could from newspaper clippings and from a society editor friend of mine. I also looked them up in the *Blue Book*. Well, the bare facts are that there is a daughter. She was in a fashionable school near Washington until a year ago. She is twenty-four. The old... I mean Mr. Olds, is a soldier of fortune. Doesn't care a hoot for society, although he belongs to every blessed fine club here and in London. Is a chum of several princes of the blood, but hasn't any sense of money. Spends it on these expeditions of his. He has painted some competent pictures."

"What do you know about art, Nimms?"

As much as you do and a lot more, Nimms thought. He replied: "Very little, A.B. I merely saw in one clipping where Mr. Olds had sold several of his submarine pictures to the British Museum or something. He is a widower. His wife died shortly after their second child, a son, was born six years ago. It looks as though they got careless when the wife arrived at that period in life..."

Brooks thundered. "Nimms! Have you no decency? Put Miss Gage on."

Ellen's voice. "The address is *The Grosvenor-Plaza*. Suite 34-A and B."

"Thanks, Ellen. Make a date for me to look over Mr. Olds' pictures as soon as possible."

Chapter Five

IN his first brief meeting with Courtney J. Olds, Brook had been shocked by his talk and distressed by his wine-breath. In fact, he had doubled his periodic contribution to the Anti-Saloon League caller who followed the summary departure of Mr. Olds. But that was before he met Enid.

Another thing that served to annoy Brook in the initial meeting was Olds' gargantuan physique. He was wide of shoulder, stood easily six feet six inches, had fists as big as box-car couplings and roared out his words. His waxed blond moustaches wiggled as he talked and his blue eyes had two definite expressions; one of out-and-out mischief and the other of plain lechery. Brook was confident that the little deeds of this world were done by great big fellows.

He looked at this differently now that he had met Enid. As he sat in Mr. Olds' bizarre studio, with its voodoo drums, assagai, big game trophies, Oriental rugs and Siamese wall-hangings, he became convinced of the man's worth. There were paintings on several easels and one large easel was vacant. Even with the wine-breath and the

bulking familiarity of Olds, Brook now was eager to believe that he came of fine stock. His swearing and his smutty frankness seemed terribly broad for a certified member of society, but no doubt it was one of the facets of his genius. Olds clearly was undisciplined and wayward. His reminiscences indicated as much. He mixed slang with science, dipped erratically into a rich but rambling memory and buried his listeners with a salad of words.

Brook kept looking at the rug-draped door, hoping for no sound reason at all, to see again that compelling creature of the bridle path. He had eaten little and slept little during the days that had intervened. He half-heard Mr. Olds expand on his technique and his travels. He watched Olds choose a picture from a rack and absently heard the towering artist's instructions.

"Here, now, Brook, I ask you to close your eyes while I'm switching these pictures on the exhibition easel. It's a trick I learned from the Japanese. You get a better effect, seeing, as it were, each new vision in completeness." Olds held the back of the picture toward Brook. "Here, now, Brook, you're not closing your eyes!"

Brook closed his eyes. "Now open them, Brook. I painted this picture at a depth of eight fathom. I could stay down only twenty minutes. Pressure, you know."

"What's it a picture of?"

"It's an undulation of the sea floor in the Pacific and near an atoll; or, as you might say, a lagoon-island. Damn it all, you can almost see the little reef-building polypifers in this work of mine. Look, old man! Look at the coral. Now shut the old eyes again, Brook."

And so on. Atolls, lagoons, barrier reefs and marine life. Fishes of the Chagos group. Sea-ferns and submerged shells. Brook looked at the rug-covered door each time he opened his eyes. Mr. Olds noticed this. "Those rugs were given me by Abdul Hamid." He winked wryly. "I had gay times with him, Brook. He had a way with women. Now the eyes again, Brook."

Olds finally explained how he worked beneath the surface of the sea. "These are not canvases, Brook. I paint on specially prepared calf-skin. It is waterproofed. The pigments are my own secret; and by the way, here's a curious thing. This cerulean blue." He stepped to a tin box, selected a tube and squeezed it. "Quite by accident, I discovered that my cerulean blue, when diluted in five per cent solution, is a bully specific for venereal disease. I had been marooned in Madagascar for six months and not a physician within five hundred miles.... I'll tell you more about it at another time."

Brook quelled a desire to leave at once. Olds went on: "I affix zinc tips to the handles of my brushes. Otherwise, my dear chap, if you let go, they float to the surface. I started out with regulation brushes but kept losing them. It's a weird sight when you lose a brush. It goes to the surface. You are aware, perhaps, that your eyes do not see beyond the surface when you are submerged. It is like an opaque glass ceiling. Then, suddenly you see an arm that appears to be amputated or to be moving like one of those God damned things at a seance as it plunges through the ceiling and picks up the brush. Then the brown arm of your native helper and your paint brush disappear as

though by magic. Now here is the easel that I use. It is brass. No rust. I use the regulation diving outfit. When I can afford it, Brook—you see we live on the fat of the land but are as poor as a pack of worn-out whores—well, I am going to construct a diving-sphere. Not as adventuresome, but permits of going to unheard-of depths.”

“Is your work so dangerous?”

“God damn it, Brook! I suppose you never did anything but bathtub work. Is it dangerous? I have to work fast. The pressure is great. I often am drawn up by my crew, bleeding like an executed Mexican. Blood oozing from my nose, mouth and ears. I was diving off Santa Cruz one time when I even bled at the eyes. Jesus! I never knew a human had so much blood in him. I actually squirted it. It was at Santa Cruz that I painted my masterpiece, the famous ‘Cavern of the Sea Peak.’ It was purchased by His Highness, the Prince of Monaco. I can still hear His Highness rhapsodize when he first cast a glim at my picture. He was a great student of marine life, you know. He turned to his secretary and exclaimed: ‘I must own this picture! My eyes will rest on its mystic beauty when I lie dying.’ Here, Brook, are you listening, or day-dreaming about one of your damned Wall Street drolleries?”

Brook started. “Yes, indeed, Mr. Olds. I am all attention.”

“As I was saying, when you dropped off like a stupid adolescent, the pressure is tremendous. You may ask: ‘But are you not encased in your suit of sea-mail? Are you not clumsy and heavy?’ To which I reply at once: ‘Not at all,

my good friend. I am as light as dawn. I paint without gloves. I sit on one submerged precipice, and when visibility is good and I see at my feet an inky abyss, but at the other side of the abyss a precipice, I long to go there. What do I do? Here, for Christ's sake, wake up! What do I do?"

Brook replied wearily: "I suppose you go to the top and have them motor you across."

Mr. Olds tossed his head contemptuously and waved a painting called "Rise, Giant Squid." He said: "We have no power-driven craft. Can't afford it. What do I do? I long to go across the abyss of ink. So I strike out gently." He set the picture down, propping it against a leg as sturdy as a tree. "Like this." In reaching to demonstrate his stroking, he knocked against a tall ebony table and upset a vase. With great dexterity, he caught the vase but a carved panel was cracked as the table fell. He readjusted table and vase and went on: "I take a few strokes; and there I am, across the abyss of ink! Isn't it amazing?"

Brook could restrain himself no longer. "Did your daughter tell you of our meeting in the park?"

Mr. Olds looked disappointed. "Oh, yes, she is always meeting up with someone.... And there I sit on the opposite side of the abyss of ink. It's damnably fantastic. Do you wonder why I love my expeditions, Brook? Yet they take money."

The mention of money reacted like a cue on Brook. "How much do you need for your next one?"

"For Tahiti?"

"Yes. Tahiti."

"Well, by retrenching to beat hell, I could get by with twenty-five thousand dollars and take chances."

"What kind of chances?"

"The kind I always have taken. I have one windlass man instead of two and a skeleton-personnel. I do without shark-scouts and I use a big row-boat instead of a motor-driven craft. What the hell do these professional divers know about hardships? The pansies!"

"Would thirty-five thousand dollars help you any?"

Mr. Olds' salmon-pink hair bristled. "It would permit of a really scientific venture."

"Well, I'm going to back you. I'll send my personal check tomorrow."

Mr. Olds kicked "Rise, Giant Squid" with a soccer-player's skill, sending it to a far corner of the studio. He advanced on Brook, slapping his back until Brook fancied his vertebræ were kissing his breast-bone. "Bully for you, Brook! My daughter said you weren't a matinee idol to look at but that you seemed like a right sort. We'll call it 'The Brook-Olds Expedition to Tahiti.' Eh? What do you say?"

"Suit yourself."

"Stick around, Brook, and we'll break the news to Enid."

"She's very attractive, Mr. Olds."

"Brook, I've had hundreds of women. I stopped counting when I got to five hundred. And I want to tell you, by God! I never saw one with the fire and personality of Bibs. She's damned extravagant, but so am I. I brought her up

myself. Her mother and I didn't hit it off. I can't stand frigid, nicey-nice women."

Brook was flabbergasted. "But your wife is dead, Mr. Olds."

"What in hell has that to do with it, eh? Must we be God damned hypocrites just because somebody is dead? Don't be an ass, Brook! Anyway, what I am getting at is that my daughter and I are almost one person, we are that close. Fight? Surely. Why not? We both are positive persons and we raise hell sometimes, especially if I have been tight the night before. Do you get grumpy after being tight?"

Brook spoke sternly. "I never have touched alcohol."

Olds was sympathetic. "You don't mean that, Brook?"

"I don't approve of it."

"My God, man! ... Well, I suppose Wall Street is a narrowing environment. ... But to get back. Where Bibs goes, I go. Where I go she goes. It's always been that way. Most girls are a total loss, but when you get a good one, one with fire and a lot of hell wrapped up in her, then you have a jewel. I love fire in a woman. I was in Madras one time (I think it was 1894, or, possibly 1893) when I met a half-caste woman ..."

Enid came through the door. She was dressed in a jade-green sport-frock. Brook rose numbly. Enid gave him her hand. She moved with a liveliness that Brook never had associated with a woman of *The Social Register*. He began to vibrate in every fiber and his tongue grew thick.

"By God, Bibs!" said Mr. Olds, "that outfit surely shows off your shape to perfection."

Enid reached up and pulled her father's moustaches. "You are a connoisseur." Then she turned to Brook. "Don't stand, Mr. Brook. Now what were you two talking of? Art or women?"

Brook mumbled incoherently. Olds roared: "Both, my little gossip. Both! They are inseparable—art and women."

Brook mobilized a few sentences. "Your father's work is interesting, Miss Olds. In fact, amazing. You see my own father was an artist."

Olds dipped into his memory. "I wonder if he was the Brook I met in Calcutta on a pig-sticking in 1901? Or was his name Brackett?"

"My father never was in India," said Brook. "He studied and painted in Paris."

"One hell of a dull place," Olds confided.

"I didn't find it so," Brook said. "I was there two years ago when I was invested with the Legion of Honor ribbon."

"You got one of those things, too?" Olds looked at Brook's lapel.

"I regard it as the highest honor ever paid me."

Olds grunted. "Undoubtedly."

"I take it you don't think highly of the Legion, Mr. Olds?"

"It's fair enough in its way."

Brook was annoyed. "I am half French. Naturally I appreciate the meaning of an order founded by Napoleon."

"I am half Scotch," said Olds. "That reminds me, Enid. Will you order up a drink?"

She rang for the butler. "What will you have, Mr. Brook?"

"Thanks, I don't drink."

"I shouldn't drink," Olds said. "It stunts my growth."

There was an uneasy silence, Brook fancying Olds had referred to his short stature. His face brightened, however, when Enid smiled at him. "I am backing your father's expedition to Tahiti, Miss Olds."

"Let me warn you against that, Mr. Brook."

He caught a serious tone. "Why do you say that?"

"He is careless with money. It's apt to cost you a great deal."

Brook smiled patronizingly. "I think I can stand it."

"Then we'll be seeing you often, Mr. Brook."

"Might I look forward to riding in the park with you, Miss Olds?"

"Surely. You have a perfectly gorgeous animal, Mr. Brook. Where on earth did you get him?"

"A present from the Government for my war work. He is Raconteur, the famous French sire."

The butler was handing Mr. Olds a highball. "I had an Arabian stallion back in 1886. It must have been 1886, because that was the year my family threw me over. I went to Persia with an Argentine dancer. God, what a choice morsel she was..."

Enid interrupted. "I noticed the smart seat you had in the park, Mr. Brook. Would you teach it to me?"

Brook glowed. He forgot wine-breath, bulking familiarity, the thirty-five-thousand-dollar promise, the lewd references of Olds, the implied slur on the Legion of Honor—

he forgot everything except the reed-like figure of Enid. There was a sudden, engulfing desire to own her, to have her for his wife. All his millions and all his prestige seemed as nothing for the moment. She only was important. So vibrant, so open and unafraid she was.... He would move heaven and earth to get her.

Back in his pent-house, he confided to Godchaux: "I am a most happy man."

Chapter Six

*A**DAM* was puzzled as well as piqued. Enid did not respond with the alacrity commonly displayed by those who cultivated *The Little Napoleon*. She frequently was "out" when he telephoned *The Grosvenor-Plaza*. When he did succeed in reaching her, she pleaded other engagements. Once it was tennis at Forest Hills with a Count Ranck. Another time she had to see the dressmaker. Again there were boxing bouts at Madison Square Garden, and in between she represented she was extremely busy with charitable work for The East Side Children's Fund.

One afternoon Adam waited until Ellen Gage had gone to another office. He felt mysteriously guilty when telephoning Enid but could not reason why. The Olds butler answered the telephone.

"Miss Enid is in the park with Master Archie, sir. Is there a message?"

"No, I guess not."

Enid was not in the park. She was standing beside the butler when Brook hung up. "If he calls again, Wallis, tell him I've gone to a soap-carving exhibition at the Anderson Galleries."

"Very good, Miss Olds."

Enid danced into the studio, where her father was refereeing a fight between Archie and the governess. It appeared that Archie had drawn some male nudes on the fly-leaves of the governess's prayer-book.

The eminent portrayer of marine flora and fauna was roaring. "Tut! There's nothing to be so damned pernickety about, Miss Whittlesey. You haven't seen such things—more's the pity—"

The outraged governess compressed her lips and dragged Archie from the studio. He could be heard whooping and coughing. The painter of "Cavern of the Sea Peak" twiggged his sharp moustaches. "Miss Whittlesey has a dirty mind. Damn it all, Bibs, you're a woman. Tell me: are men's bodies that offensive?"

"On the contrary. Women's bodies are nothing to be compared with men's."

"Here now! You're going too damned far. Give me a woman's body every time. Whittlesey has been a miser with hers. Look at her! All dried up like a prune. Who'd want to sleep with a prune? For God's sake, Bibs, don't ever get dried up like a prune!"

"Our friend Brook just called."

"There's another goody-goody. Did you notice how his eyes bugged out when I spoke of my Argentine dancer?"

"He's a stick, but he has money."

"What did he say?"

"Wallis told him I wasn't in."

"He probably wanted to know if I had started for Tahiti."

"I think he has a crush on me."

"Well, he would be no different than the rest. Every time you come into the room the pictures begin shaking on the wall; like that time I was in the earthquake in Venice. By the way, my friend Count Rossi was killed in that earthquake. Did I ever tell you?"

"I don't remember it."

"Well, he was. A hell of a shame, too. A loose tile fell on him while he was on his way to an assignation. Lucky thing I was in Venice at the time to console his sweetheart. His damned fat wife kept plying me with personal questions right up to the funeral. A funeral in Venice is quite a spectacle, Bibs. Gondolas in black, plashing oars and the muffled tread forward and back of the gondoliers. In and out, the slender craft glide beneath arching bridges. I'll never forget that funeral. I looked at the Count's fine face in the light of candles. Then I called on his former mistress and we got roaring drunk. That was the night I swam to the Lido."

Enid turned on the radio and held out her arms to her father. They began dancing slowly, then, when the music quickened, she clasped her hands behind her father's thick neck. He whirled her as she hung there; an adagio that made her seem to be flying to the moon. Olds at fifty-four years moved as swiftly as a young man. They swirled until Enid's foot struck an easel, dislodging an undersea study depicting "The Calcareous Mud of St. George's." In

stopping, Mr. Olds' boot-heel pressed through the calfskin on which the calcareous mud was portrayed.

"There goes St. George's!" Enid said.

Mr. Olds reached over with crane-like solemnity. "I'll reconstruct it when I get to Tahiti."

"When are we going to get out the tincup and start begging in the Park?"

The painter of "Rise, Giant Squid" got up, walked about the studio and then stood before Enid, swaying on his great legs like an elephant day-dreaming of peanuts. "You should have seen how fast that Brook check for thirty-five thousand traveled."

"I hope to God you paid some bills instead of giving presents like you did last time."

"What in hell do you mean?"

"You know what I mean all right. That McCreery woman. Honest to God, I never understood what you saw in her. She must have been forty-two."

Olds was embarrassed. "You don't mean to say I ever gave a woman *money*, do you?"

"Well, you might as well. You bought her some furniture, didn't you? Don't shake your head. You did! My God! And you the kind of animal that should be *paid* for even looking at such a piece."

"Shut your mouth! What does a damned virgin know about it, anyway? Why, hell! Mrs. McCreery had a lot of charm. Fine legs. But I never gave her a cent. I'm God damned extravagant, but nobody can say I ever *paid* a woman. Let me tell you something, you crazy little. . . . Oh,

hell! Shut up! We shouldn't talk of such things. It's...it's immoral....Let's not quarrel."

"I want you to have a good time," she said, "but I don't like to hear of you paying a gold-digger like that McCreery woman."

"Are you going to quit it? Or will I have to go to the Club?"

"You can go to Mrs. McCreery if you want."

"See here. That was only an episode. I've had ten women since then, not counting the albino girl that got your goat last summer."

"How much did you pay the albino?"

Mr. Olds gnashed his teeth. "I hope to God you dry up like Whittlesey! Like a prune! When you talk like that you remind me of your mother. Let's have a drink and forget it."

She sat on her father's lap. "Do you feel better after a brain-storm?"

He hugged her impulsively. "I hope to God you never leave me. I suppose you'll fall in love sometime. It's no good, but you might as well experience it."

"Well, if the Brook check is spent, it's spent. To hell with him. I don't want you to worry about it."

The painter of inky abysses smiled with one side of his mouth, the moustache on that side rising as though hinged to its brother moustache. "I was diving and painting off Keeling Island in 1913. Jesus, what a place! Maybe it was in 1912. Yes, it was, because that was the year I got mixed up with Lieutenant Lahr. He was with a Scottish brigade at the time. We were in a bar and I didn't like

him anyway. He had adenoids, and I detest anybody with adenoids. He said to me: 'Your country bungles the tariff situation.' I said to him: 'You're an army man. Why don't you stick to your trade?' He said to me: 'Your President Taft tried to put through a reciprocity agreement with Canada, didn't he?' I answered that I didn't give a damn what Taft had done. Then he said to me: 'That's what's wrong with Americans, they don't understand what is going on.' Then he said that Roosevelt was just another bag of wind. I said to him: 'You are a fool, sir. I am personally acquainted with your sovereign and he is a gentleman. But some of his servants are fools.' I slapped him in the face. His adenoids made me furious. He challenged me to a duel. As the challenged party, I had a choice of weapons. His seconds said to me: 'What weapons do you choose?' I said: 'Broadwords, God damn it!' It floored them. They begged me to reconsider, saying they didn't know where to find any. 'That's up to you, damn it!' I said. 'Find some broadwords, for that's the weapons I choose.'"

Enid was listening in amazement. "Did the fight come off?"

"I wish you had been there. When Lieutenant Lahr faced me, he was purple. The broadwords made him furious. They had to comb the country to find a pair. He tried to parry and to thrust, but the sword was so heavy that it carried him off balance!"

"Did you wound him?"

Olds laughed, snorted and made all manner of noises. "What a day! Every time he whirled off balance, I whacked

his backside good and hearty, like you would strike with a barrel stave. His seconds claimed he was wounded. He had a rump that was as raw as a roast of beef. He had to eat his meals off the mantel-piece for two weeks."

"No wonder women are crazy over you."

He went to the window and looked out at the traffic. "I was in Holland once on a spring day just like this. I was looking out a window, too, when I saw a girl driving a dog-cart. Christ! I'll never forget that spring day. She was a wide-hipped wench. Well set-up and as blonde as you are." Olds walked up and down the room while Enid sat looking at him. "She was a very pretty girl. . . . Well, to hell with it! I was telling you how I was diving and painting off Keeling Island. I went down about twelve fathom off that God damned island. Holy God! I never bled so much in my life. Eyes, ears and nose. You would have been amazed to have seen me. Covered with blood! Spouting it like a fountain! God, what a hell of a lot of blood for a man to have!"

"I wish I had been there."

"You would have doubted your eyes. You see, I had been attacked by an octopus. I jerked my signal rope and made a grab for my painting. I was then working on that one over there: 'Seismic Fissures in Dead Coral.' I fouled my air tube. *Jeesus!* I was strangling. They pulled me to the top with difficulty. I felt the sea-monster's arm encircling my rubber as I faded out. When I came to I was bleeding at every pore. I had the bends. We had no decompression chamber like they have in their modern diving work. Not even a soul with any sense around me. They

got a native doctor who said to me that he never had seen so much blood. Maybe I am so full of life that I just spurt out."

"Amazing," Enid said.

Olds paused. "Well, there isn't any point to the story, except that they thought I was dying. I thought so, too. And since then, I have regarded myself as living on borrowed time. If I could survive all that bleeding and strangling, I guessed I could stand anything. I decided never to worry again. And to live my own life as I damned well pleased."

"How long did you bleed?"

"Five days and nights. It was fantastic."

"Wonderful!"

"That's why I don't give a damn what happens to me. I made up my mind to raise hell the rest of my life if I pulled through."

"Most people get repentant under such circumstances and promise to become holy."

"I'll never forget how I spouted blood."

"That's what makes you different." She looked at him admiringly. "Say, do you know what I've been thinking while you were talking?"

"No. Don't you believe I spouted all that blood?"

"Certainly I believe it. I was thinking of something entirely different. This fellow Brook has more money than there is in the world. He is addle-headed and all, but I think I'm going to marry him." Olds waved a hand. She pulled his hand down. "Wait till I'm through. He isn't a dream prince and there isn't a chance of my loving him.

But he has money. I'll find fun somehow, even if I do marry him."

"Oh, shut up! Don't talk like that. Didn't you notice his runty build? What do you want to raise? Some mid-gets? You're just a God damned contrary wench. What do you want to get married for anyway? Why leave me?"

"Wouldn't you rather have me marry Brook and keep you near me than run off with somebody as big and handsome as you?"

"Go ahead and do as you please! I don't give a damn. Marry a nigger if you want. Only don't ever leave me."

Chapter Seven

the time came for Enid to ride with Brook, he was on edge. He hastened through his official day with no end of annoyances. An irritating cough added to his upsettishness. His valet's razor nicked his chin during a coughing spell.

It was one of his "no" days, wherein he turned down each and every suggestion. Judge Webb urged him to call a conference concerning the oil lease tangle. Brook said curtly there would be no conferences. He refused to see the Anti-Saloon League representative. He fired an office boy who had misappropriated a sheet of postage stamps. He informed Noble J. Nimms that *Brookol's* new slogan: "Make Your Miles Smile" was absolutely rotten.

A groom reported by telephone that Raconteur had passed a restless night in the box-stall where he was housed as snugly as a bishop. "Wouldn't get hoff 'is feet all night, sir," said the groom. "'E 'ung 'is 'ead hall night, sir. Hit maybe 'e 'as the botts, sir. 'E wheezes like."

"Never mind, Bagstock," Brook said. "Have him at the block sharp at two."

Brook put on his riding clothes in the Napoleon Room that adjoined his office. He was whizzed to the park.

He cast a panoramic glance as he got out of his car. The young woman was not there, nor was her gray horse there. He looked sharply at Raconteur, who was not so full of wind and fire today. Brook stood, thwacking his burnished boots with his crop and frowning. The damnable cough set in again. It had a savage, whooping quality now.

For fifteen minutes he stood. Then he saw her. She was driving her car, a small and smart open one, and she was coming at reckless speed. She brought her car to a grinding stop. For a moment Raconteur was stirred from his lethargy. Enid was radiant with spring. Brook shoved aside an attendant and himself handed her from the car.

"Hello, teacher," she said, her teeth flashing.

Brook clouded. "I thought you were coming alone?"

She motioned toward Archie, whose red head and impish face had not been seen by Brook until the car was halted. "The day is so splendid," said Enid, "that I just had to bring Buzzy. It benefits his whooping cough, you know."

Enid's gray gelding now was being led into the park. Beside it was Archie's calico pony. Enid had been powdering her nose. She was partly turned from Brook but studied his glum expression in the mirror of her compact.

They had some difficulty in mounting Archie. He howled that he wished to ride bareback. "You said I could play Indian," said Archie.

"I said we would play Indian tomorrow."

"The hell you did!" said Archie. "I want to play it now."

Brook had an urge to use his crop on Archie. "Don't talk to your sister that way, young man."

"Go wash your neck," said Archie to The Little Napoleon.

"It's his father's fault," Enid said. "He spoils him sick."

"I understand perfectly," said Brook.

Eventually they prevailed on Archie to be modern and ride in a saddle. Archie had a coughing fit and so did Brook. He told Enid it was just a slight cold, but she wondered about it.

"Did you notice I had the stirrup-leathers shortened for the forward seat?" she asked.

"Perhaps they are too short, Miss Olds. You don't want a Cossack effect."

She laughed. "Maybe I am a Cossack."

Whatever she meant by this was lost on him. He was wondering how he could lose Archie. She seemed to sense his problem. "Suppose you sit here with Archie while I ride past," she said. "Then you can criticize my riding ability."

"Just as you say, Miss Olds."

She took her horse on a canter up the bridlepath. She wheeled at a furlong, and, almost standing in the irons, she gave her gray a smart bat with her crop and came thundering toward Brook. The superb poise of this willowy creature made Adam forget Archie and other problems. Teach her! Teach her *what*? Like a jockey in the stretch, she took the wraps off her gelding. Her hat blew off. She

laughed with wild abandon, holding the reins with one hand and waving her crop with the other. Her rather short, wavy hair whipped in the wind like a pale golden flame. A hundred yards past Brook, she again wheeled and, half-standing in the stirrups, brought the snorting gray toward The Little Napoleon.

"You'll catch on quickly," he mumbled. He did not comprehend the mischievous glint in her eyes. Nor did he know that she had won the hunters' awards at Piping Rock three years running.

Buzzy was sulking on his pony. He pointed to Enid's hat, which was about forty yards up the path. "Who's going to get it?" he asked. Brook colored and started towards the hat with Raconteur. He proceeded at a dignified pace, posting with precise rhythm. Just as he neared the hat there was a splitting yell. Buzzy and his calico pony brushed past. The little fiend dashed up to the hat, leaned over and plucked it from the ground as though he were a cowboy. He had the generosity to ride to Brook, whose brow held thunder, and give the hat to him.

All three then rode slowly, so that Buzzy's short-legged pony could match pace. Brook began to cough. Archie dropped back to examine the obelisk, for which Brook was glad. He sought to make conversation.

"I suppose your father will be off to Tahiti soon?"

A smile flickered on her full little mouth. "You never can tell. He's impulsive. He may go tomorrow. Or it may be a year."

"Do you usually accompany him?"

"Not on expeditions. That's about the only thing we differ on. I like cities. I love life and hustle."

"He seems rather alive."

"I didn't mean that. He certainly is alive. In fact, it is only when I am with him that I feel really alive. Other men seem so dead compared to him. But I don't get a kick out of sticking around smelly boats, watching him take dives."

"He's a rather odd sort, Miss Olds, but I like him."

"I don't know whether he's odd or not. He's different."

"He seems to have had many experiences."

"He's done everything. Seen everything. I'm wild over him."

"It's rather unusual for a father to have such a hold over his daughter these days."

"He has no hold over me. We hold each other. He's morally honest. He's a playboy. He drinks a lot and he is always having affairs. Well, why not?"

"I hope he wasn't offended because I resented his lack of respect for the Legion of Honor."

She laughed uproariously at this. Brook gazed at her dumbfoundedly. "Why, he was given the Legion of Honor ribbon himself, long before I was born."

Brook gagged. "You don't mean to say?"

"Certainly. He has more decorations than he can remember. He doesn't wear them, because he doesn't want to. The experiences of life and not the rewards are what interest him. Why, he was a Colonel in the World War, yet he won't let anyone call him that. He has a coal scuttle full of medals."

Brook felt empty. "He should be proud of the Legion ribbon, however."

"Suppose you take that up with him. And by the way, that check you sent..."

Brook raised his hand. "Please don't mention it. It was nothing."

"It's nothing now. He spent the whole of it to pay some of our obligations. Am I not frank?"

Brook was startled by this betrayal of trust. Yet, as he looked at her, he was carried completely away. Love was throwing Mr. Brook up for grabs. He wished he could find words to propose. A coughing fit seized Archie and Enid spurred toward the child. Brook, too, began to cough and Archie roared: "He's making fun of my whooping cough!"

"Shut up," Enid commanded. "He's doing no such thing."

"He is so!" Archie insisted. "And I don't like him."

BROOK was sitting up in bed. Dr. Corbett stood beside him. "Good Lord, A.B.! You have whooping cough."

"Don't joke with me."

"It's as plain as day. Where on earth were you exposed?"

Adam knew perfectly well where he had been exposed. He remembered the day when he had caught a blast squarely in the face. Then he recalled the slender, live figure of Enid as she galloped her horse. He said: "I haven't any idea where I got it. Will it keep me down?"

SHOE THE WILD MARE

"Not necessarily but it's damned annoying. What other children's diseases have you had?"

"Mumps and chicken-pox. That's all."

After Dr. Corbett had gone, Brook said to his valet: "Cocker, were you ever in love?"

"Indeed I was, sir," said Cocker, "and I'd rather have your whooping cough."

Brook sighed and lay back, wondering.

Chapter Eight

IN the weeks that followed, Brook fell more deeply in love. He told Enid of his feeling for her, but she replied that she did not love him at all. Her unattainability maddened him. Finally he declared he would make her love him.

After considering the matter for a long time, Adam decided to enlist the help of Enid's father. It was a Sunday in July, the anniversary in fact of Napoleon's splendid victory of Wagram. The day was humid and hot. Brook set out on foot from his pent-house, composing speeches and conjuring wedding presents. He was clad in morning coat and silk topper. He carried his shining black stick sword-fashion. His shoes felt uncomfortable. He had ordered Cocker to send all his boots to the cobbler, having an extra tap of leather put on the heels to give him a shade more height.

The bulking painter of "Rise, Giant Squid," was on a divan in his studio, half dozing, as Brook was announced. Mr. Olds set down a whiskey and soda and rose to greet The Little Napoleon of Pine Street. "Look here, Brook, I'm damned glad to see you. It's jungle-hot today, eh?"

Adam was perspiring like an evangelist promising hell-

fire to sots and wife-beaters. His feet hurt. "Glad to see you, Olds."

The portrayer of "Cavern of the Sea Peak" offered Brook a chair. "Here, Brook. Sit where you can turn your back on this God damned city." Olds swung his great arm as though to knock over towers and steeples. "The children of Baal are simulating quiet today. The modern Sodom is stinking with fake lassitude."

"It's a quiet day," Brook said.

The appraiser of inky abysses gulped the remainder of his whiskey and soda, drawing in a fragment of ice which he crunched with gusto. "Quiet, say you? Have you ever been on the sea-floor? Have you ever been down five, six, ten fathom beneath the surface of the sea?" He snorted and his eyes flashed. "You call this quiet. Why, God damn it to hell, this is bedlam! Down where the sea-mammals mate and where the slow-waving fronds of marine growths beat in silent symphony—there, damn it all, is quiet!"

"I suppose so."

"Suppose, hell! I was diving and making soundings off the Society Islands in 1899. I was down only a short way, investigating polypifers. You know they can exist only at limited depths. There was only a dim, pulsing sound. Just as when you put a conch shell to your ears. Did you ever put a conch shell to your ears?"

"Yes. They say it is the echo of the sea."

"Oh, hell, man! Be more scientific. It's no such damned thing. It's the sound of your own blood."

"Is that it?"

"Didn't I just tell you it was? I ought to know about

blood. Christ knows I have spouted enough blood in my time. Gallons of it! I was telling my daughter only the other day how I spurted blood like a whale blows water. Well, only the roar of my blood-stream, and that greatly muted, was in my ears. No helmet-telephone to annoy me. Damn it all, Brook! These modern divers wouldn't go down without a telephone."

"It adds to their efficiency, don't you think?"

"Don't I think? say you. You're damned right I think. And I think nothing of the sort. Telephones be damned! A man with guts doesn't need a telephone. Pretty soon they'll be taking their radios with them so they can listen to dance music. I dance with death when I am down there. My God! how quiet it was! I had a temptation never to come up at all. I was having a hell of a time with my wife in those days. I soon settled that, however. Don't ever get married, Brook. Get yourself a woman..."

"I'd like to discuss something with you, Mr. Olds."

The painter looked at him shrewdly. "I know. I know. You have come to ask me for my daughter's hand, as they say."

Brook flushed to the ears. "How did you know that?"

"You have that hang-dog look. I can see it in your eyes. They are glassy, like that shark's I killed off the Bermudas. Don't shake your head, damn it all! Come out with it! Don't jigger around like a child trying to steal a banana."

"Well, if you put it that way..."

"So you want to marry Bibs, eh? Here, let me order myself another drink. Well, she's a hell of a swell girl. Of

all the women I ever had, and they run into the hundreds, I never met one yet that could hold a candle to Bibs. It is my misfortune to be her father. Otherwise, I should marry her myself. No, I don't think I would, either. I love her too much. I would go live with her. A father can't pay a greater compliment than that, eh?"

Brook was horrified. "Has she said anything about me to you?"

"Hell, yes! You don't know our relation. We're pals."

Adam sat there confusedly. Olds leaned forward. "Listen, Brook. I don't want to give advice. I wouldn't take advice myself. If I want a woman, I go out and get her. I don't ask anybody. Well, you want a woman. It happens to be Bibs. And what a girl! Did you ever see such grace? Such hips and ankles? You've got dollars. Millions of 'em. Well, man to man, I think Bibs is too tough for you."

"I wish you wouldn't...."

"I'm not speaking as her father. I'm telling you man to man. Don't marry her! She'll throw you sure. She's as wild as hell. A wild mare! That's what she is. A wild mare! You'll try to put golden shoes on her. Maybe you can. But you'll never get a saddle on her, so help me Christ! Never! She's that kind. God love her!"

Brook was frozen stiff by such unthinkable words. Olds went on: "In all my damned life, I've never seen but one wench that could compare with Bibs. She was thirteen and I was thirty. It was in Thessaly. I was war correspondent for Bennett of the old *Herald*. I was with the Turks under Edham Pasha. We had driven back the Greeks under Crown Prince Constantine, after a terrible skirmish.

They fell back through Thessaly to Velestino and Pharsala. We were following them leisurely when I met little Refeka Hanoum. I outwitted her eunuch that night. She was on her way to join Pasha's harem. I'll never forget her..."

Brook leaped to his feet. "For Christ's sake shut up!"

Olds subsided. "Shall we talk of submerged peaks?"

Brook exploded: "What kind of man are you? Damn it all! Why... Why, it's your own daughter; the woman I love! And you... you..." Brook ran out of breath.

Olds seemed sad and distraught. He sipped his drink, then got up and went to an easel and picked up a palette, on which splotches of paint lay wetly. He appeared to have forgotten Brook entirely, taking up a brush and retouching a picture. "I think I have captured the spirit of my own life in this picture. I call it 'Lashing Waves and Defiant Polypifers'."

Brook throbbed. "I want you to know that your daughter is the first woman I ever intended to marry—and the last. You and I differ, Olds. You speak casually of your affairs. I never have thought of a woman casually or carnally."

Olds continued to touch up his picture. Aside from a clucking sound, he paid no attention to Brook. There was a long silence and then Enid entered the studio. She nodded to Brook and kissed her father. He put down his brush and pointed to Adam, whose black eyes were bulging with pain and wonderment.

"He's just asked me for your hand, Bibs. I advised him against marrying you. But his ungovernable passions

won't let him rest. Well, I've given my consent." Olds clapped his big hands in a wild and merry manner. "Did you hear? I've given my consent!"

Brook stood there, squirming inside and wishing to back out. Olds roared: "Come on! Come on, you two! Don't be mummies. Don't stand like that, Enid. It reminds me of your mother. Well, she was an ideal wife, the world would say. Knew how to cook and do without servants when times were bad. Hell! You'll never be an ideal wife, Enid. That's what I just told Brook. My God! What gets into a man like that? If he had come to me and said he wanted to seduce you, there would have been some point to it...but he's worth millions. God knows we need money. He's a swell guy, Bibs. I like him. Go on and kiss each other..." Olds was looking fixedly at Enid. He saw something in her eyes, something serious that he was unable to stand. He roared: "For God's sake kiss each other! Go on. Do something passionate..."

He turned suddenly, went to the door, stood there for a moment at soldierly attention. Then he disappeared through the Oriental hangings. A few moments later, there was the terrific banging of a door and Adam fancied he heard a groan.

"Will you marry me?" Brook asked.

"Yes, I'll marry you."

THEY were married in St. Sebastian's Church on October twenty-first. Judge Webb was best man and Pierpont Jones III was usher. Courtney J. Olds gave his daughter

in marriage and held her arm so tightly beneath his huge elbow that her wrist was bruised. Ellen Gage was seen to kneel at the rear of the church while those about her wondered at such behavior.

Due to the fact that Brook's yacht had not been commissioned on schedule, Noble J. Nimms chartered the cruiser of a Michigan Senator. It was anchored off the Columbia Yacht Club in the North River.

After the departure of bride and groom for a Bermuda cruise, Courtney J. Olds, Judge Webb and Pierpont Jones III., went to a club, where they drank copiously and talked about women of the late nineteenth century.

"Lily Langtry was a gorgeous creature," Judge Webb said.

"I had just returned to London from an elephant-hunt in Africa," Olds said. "I was the guest of Sir Philip Cleavetree, and he and Lady Cleavetree took me to a fête. The Jersey Lily was then the rage. She arrived at the fête, accompanied by..."

On and on and on.... They talked on and on.

The Michigan Senator's yacht sailed on and on and on.

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Chapter Nine

THE honeymooners returned a full month sooner than Brook had planned. He yielded to Enid's demand that they curtail their cruise and sail back to New York. Her continual references to her father annoyed The Little Napoleon. He tried every way he could to divert her. She seemed cold and he wondered why she sat on the after-deck all day, staring at the wake of the vessel. Whenever he touched her, she shuddered.

"I'll have Dr. Corbett look into your nervous condition," he said. She offered no comment but went to her stateroom and locked the door. When he knocked later, she called hysterically: "Go away, please. For God's sake, go away and let me alone!"

Once Brook slipped behind her as she sat looking at the sea. He kissed the back of her neck. He believed such a gesture to be a playful sign of affection. When she started as though to leap over the rail, he decided not to come on her again so suddenly. He stood woodenly and wondered about it. Then he said he was going to buy her a string of black pearls for the white neck that had been kissed.

During the honeymoon days, Brook bombarded her with protestations of his pre-marital chastity. He became carried away by the recital of his virtues. "God only knows how happy it makes me to come to you as untouched as you have come to me."

Why didn't she speak? Why didn't she have a word of praise for one who had kept so clean in a dirty world? He went on:

"We'll live at *Brook Towers* in the cold weather, but I want to start married life at *Bonnybrook*. We'll have a villa at Newport if you want? Would you like that?"

"It doesn't make a bit of difference."

"Oh, but it does. I think *Bonnybrook* ideal for the start. We shall go to the pent-house for Thanksgiving. What a lot I have to be thankful for! We'll sit before the great fireplace, just we two. There will be huge logs in it. When your father comes to visit us, we'll put him in the trophy room, where the Napoleonic relics are. Do you know, Enid, if I didn't love you so much, I wouldn't think of letting your father use that room. No one but myself has ever slept in it. There are twelve of The Emperor's authenticated hats in that room. A priceless collection..."

She spoke rather wearily: "My father isn't coming to visit us at all, Adam."

"I don't understand. Are you mad at him?"

"My father and brother are going to live with us."

His jaw dropped. "Well, now, isn't that rather impossible?"

"Not in the least."

He moved up and down on the balls of his feet. "Aren't they comfortable where they are?"

She flared: "Damn it! must you be a bungler in everything? I said they are going to live with me! Can't you understand that I love my father? You think you are somebody. Great God! If I had to be alone with you much longer I'd go to smash. I'm sorry, but it's the truth."

He was terribly hurt. "Well, if it will make you happy."

At his desk again, Adam thought of means of impressing his wife. He had tried many an expedient only to be repulsed. She seemed very fond of her small brother, so Brook endeavored to win Archie's favor. He met with little success. It galled Adam to think of this youngster as his brother-in-law. It seemed so incongruous. He held his temper when the boy blurted out criticisms of Brook's endeavors. He bought ponies for Archie; he had an artificial lake made so that the boy could sail his toy yachts. He hired a man to watch the lad as he paddled a canoe in the shallow water. He dressed Archie like a czarévitch, only to see him return to the house with fine linen blouse torn to ribbons and his French serge suit splattered with mud.... If Enid had a heart, she would know that he wanted a son of his very own.

A golf course was laid out on the *Bonnybrook* acres. A professional was hired. Enid used the course but once.

Hardly anyone went over it except the towering Mr. Olds. He informed the indulgent pro that he had been off his game ever since the day, years ago, when he was runner-up at the St. Andrews' tourney.

Adam commissioned Nimms to purchase two saddle horses for Enid, one of them a superb hunter. He brought Raconteur from the city and sought to accompany her through the Old Westbury countryside. She made it plain that she wanted to ride alone.

He tried to interest her in bees and established an apiary on the estate. She became nervous concerning Archie, who threw rocks at the hives. Brook ruefully shipped his insects to his Illinois model-farm. Nor was Enid impressed by the dozen prize cows which were placed in a barn that might have been any man's mansion.

Enid had fits of despondency and then outbursts of temper. She was a wild mare, indeed! One day when Ellen Gage came to *Bonnybrook* in connection with a wheat report to the President, Enid refused to meet her. The next day she advised Adam never to "bring that woman here again." She would give no reason except: "I don't want anyone gawking at me."

On one October morning, Brook was inspired. He sent for Noble J. Nimms. "You know a lot about horses, Nimms; but do you know fox-hunting?"

Nimms, who was angling for an increase in salary, pounced on the query. "I rode with the *Myopia* for five seasons after I left Harvard."

The mention of one of America's oldest and most

notable hunts impressed Brook. "It's a bully hunt, Myopia."

"There's nothing keener than Myopia, A.B."

"Well, Nimms, I've decided to set up a pack of hounds."

"I thought you hunted with the Meadowbrook?"

"I have, off and on, but the field is getting too crowded for comfort. They're running English hounds at Meadowbrook and to my mind English hounds don't show interesting sport in this country. When I go out for a run, I want a run."

Nimms almost genuflected. "That's typical of you, A.B. Well, if you want to set up hounds of your own, I can get you a draft." He named several clubs too rapidly for Brook to follow. "And out of the lot you ought to assemble just the type you want."

"Not too big," Brook interjected. "About fifteen couple; and I want the American fox-hound."

"You are quite right, A.B. The American fox-hound, Virginia-bred and trained—I prefer Walker or July—is superior to any hound ever brought across the water. Better in foot, nose and voice."

"Exactly. And I want a capable hunter, one that will carry me well."

"It's as good as done, A.B."

"Also, I want to set up a hunting box. Off the Meadowbrook country, naturally."

"There are any number of sections to the east that won't interfere. The country is bully in the middle of Long Island."

As Nimms rose to leave, Adam said: "Look here. That

publicity concerning my wedding trip wasn't anything to cheer about."

Nimms was fearful. "I thought we had a fine press, A.B."

"Never mind what *you* thought. In quantity it was competent, but the photographs made Mrs. Brook look much taller than she actually is. How can you explain that?"

"I noticed that, too, A.B., but it seems the camera men took the pictures at a wrong angle."

"You should have seen to that."

"I certainly regret it, A.B."

"Well, Nimms, we'll forget about it and we'll give you that increase, provided you don't fall down on my hunt-plans."

"I'll not fall down, A.B. And thank you so much for the raise."

Brook spoke crisply. "The increase is only tentative, Nimms. We'll see how you handle this matter."

Judge Webb came in to seek an interview regarding those shaky oil leases. Brook smiled. "Do you know what I'm going to do instead of bothering with oil leases, Judge?"

"What could be more important at this moment, A.B.?"

Adam toyed with the iron apple paperweight on his desk. "I'm going to Cartier's right off to buy my wife a black pearl necklace."

"Then you're not worried about the leases?"

Adam looked at Judge Webb coldly. "I'm paying you to do my worrying, Judge."

Judge Webb's whiskers bristled, but he turned away without comment. He went to his own offices, where he poured a stiff drink from his Overholt bottle.

Chapter Ten

IT was not difficult for Noble J. Nimms to get a draft in November and at about the time when all the hunts of America had walked the young entry and knew what hounds were good. He obtained a few couple here and a few couple there.

Brook was quivering for the hunt. He had not advised Enid of this gesture. He intended it to be a surprise that would rally her from her desuetude. He would show her in the field that he was a rare man.

When all was ready, Brook announced to Enid and in the presence of her father that he had set up a pack and for them to be ready on the morrow. She received the news of the private pack with misgivings. Still, she was somewhat cheered and her father said he'd have a fling. Brook frowned, believing that his father-in-law didn't know a horse from a reindeer or a hound from a turtle.

"I have invited a field of sixteen," Brook said.

THE invited ones came to Westbury. Nimms hovered in the background, thinking of an increase in salary and

doing a bit of praying. Pierpont Jones III., a novice at country sport, had cancelled a day indoors with Bertha to attend the hunt.

The horses were sent on in charge of grooms. The guests went by motor. All the way to the meet, Adam sought to enliven Enid's mood, but her dratted father butted in continually. There could be no privacy. Furthermore, Olds insisted on repeating anecdotes of his own hunting days.

"Have I ever ridden to hounds?" Nobody had asked the painter of "Lashing Waves and Defiant Polypifers" this or any other question. He took a case from his tweed riding-coat and selected a card. Then he brought out a stub of a pencil and scribbled something.

Brook looked at the card which was handed him. "Oh, yes. The Belvoir." He tossed the card out of the window of the car.

Mr. Olds burst into rattling laughter. "You must pronounce it 'Beever,' Adam my boy. Don't let the hounds hear you! It's spelled B-e-l-v-o-i-r. But it's pronounced—Haw! Haw! that's one on you, Adam! It's pronounced 'Beever.'"

Adam glared. The painter of "Cavern of the Sea Peak" went on relentlessly. "It was at the Belvoir in 1896—or was it 1897? Well, anyway, we chopped a fox after a six-mile point, and at the end of a day which began with a field of seventy and ended with nobody up but the master—Lord Dewar—and myself. My God, how drunk we were! Will you believe me, Adam? We went right through a river—the Belvoir was hunting Leicestershire, you know,

and what a topping country it is!—well, we were after the hounds and we went right through the river. And do you know? We were all so full and so happy that until we got off our beasts at the end of the run, none of us knew we were wet. Haw! Haw! Haw!” He smote Brook’s knee. “Adam, you should have seen Dewar! I looked at him and I said: ‘Dewar, my boy, you look more like Sewer!’”

It was a clement hunting morning. Brook, his ears dinned by anecdotes, handed Enid from the car while Olds was saying: “I have hunted the Quorn, too, with a field of four hundred. I remember the Duke of...”

BROOK, as master, was in pink. There were three hunt-servants in livery, one of whom was in actuality the huntsman but was paid to keep his mouth shut on that point, pretending to be merely a whip, on the theory that Brook hunted his own hounds. Whenever a cast was made, he and Adam got down together. “Mr. Brook’s hounds” also boasted a terrier and his bag-man; the fox terrier being confined in a bag slung across the saddle bow. It was this man’s business to get down with the terrier when a fox went to earth; the terrier being despatched to hole “Charley” out.

With little fencing in this section of Long Island, and most of it so old that a good horse could shore through with little risk to the rider, Brook felt he was destined to cut a superb figure in pink. Nimms had bought him a level-headed Irish half-bred which knew more about hunting than Brook himself ever was destined to learn.

Nimms knew that Brook would be perfectly safe on this horse, which was so sagacious that when he felt any indecision on the part of a rider, it was his custom to slow his stride before coming up to a jump and then refusing so gently that there was no danger of his burden falling off. The horse was a roan, handsome, but no Raconteur. Nor was he an "entire" horse, Nimms holding, with no little justification, that Brook should have a hunter which could keep its mind on the morning's work.

The meet was at a cross-road and in a slightly, though not extensively, wooded country. Brook, riding with the hounds at heel, led the field at a foot-pace to a covert a quarter of a mile away. There, his whip had informed him, he had marked down a fox the night before.

Most amazingly—since the report of the servant who had professed to have marked down the fox was pure fiction—the hounds found after but a few minutes in covert. They were away with Mr. Brook well up, right where a master should be. It was the greatest opportunity the news-reel cameramen of America ever missed. Amazingly again, the hounds ran a four-mile point; were at fault for only a few minutes, then found the line and were away once more. With their noses up they ran, and the pace "too good to enquire."

Never was there a hunt upon which the gods who look after financiers gazed more benignly. For, breaking from scent to view, the hounds were in full cry. In a trice they were on their fox and chopped him just as the field, riding at their proper distance in back of the pack, came up to scrutinize a picture of fox hunting in America that

was the very essence of sport and drama. Adam Brook stood with the corpse of the fox, holding it by the scruff, high out of reach of the yelping hounds. The lashes of whips cut the air with rifle-like cracks as the hunt-servants drove back the eager animals.

By another miracle—and as Adam had longed to have it happen—Enid was first up and was entitled to the brush. Adolph Canfield, at whose adjoining estate the entire hunt was invited for tea, was next and received the mask. The first pad went to Mrs. Ainsmith, the spirited Suffolk County horsewoman. The second and third pads went respectively to Hornsby Ritter, the disinfectant king, and Pierpont Jones III., the novice. Then, to Adam's disgust, came Courtney J. Olds, whose beast was about done-in from carrying 296 pounds of art and science. To him went, of course, the fourth pad and the last of the trophies of the hunt.

Adam was further disgruntled when the father-in-law said: "I hope it's a rabbit's foot, Adam."

The hunt then repaired to Mr. Canfield's country place, where Brook, as Master, was technically the "host." So successful had been the hunt that he did not frown with his usual disapproval on the "pink tea"—which of course opened the way for rum and reminiscence.

Nor was Brook as upset as he might have been when he heard the booming voice of Mr. Olds and the words: "I'm always getting the foot. My son-in-law gave me the fourth foot today."

Brook moved about, sipping his tea and offering sage observations on hunting. It was a bit after 11 o'clock in the

morning and by noon the guests were becoming mellow beneath the soothing influence of Mr. Canfield's liquors. Wheeled tables, containing arrays of champagne were going the rounds. Corks popped and Mr. Olds bubbled.

By one o'clock there was much merriment and everyone who had partaken of Mr. Canfield's hospitality began to act natural. Brook wanted to retire with his triumph, but in his rôle of technical host, he dared not. He wanted to be alone with Enid, possibly to hear her compliment him.

The guests were talking of hunts and hunting in general. Mr. Olds was having a discussion with Mr. Canfield on breeding. "In the late winter," Mr. Canfield was saying, "masters and huntsmen begin to think of the most suitable stallion hounds, not only in their own but in other kennels, for the coming breeding season."

Mr. Olds was rocking a glass of wine in his fist. "A dog hound never should be allowed to serve a bitch during his first season."

"That would depend on the date of birth."

"I grant you that," Mr. Olds replied between hiccoughs, "but I hold with the late Sir Thomas Finley—with whom, by God, I have had keen sport both afield and indoors—that if a dog hound is whelped, let us say the first of February, and is in every way suitable as a stallion hound, I would allow him to serve only three bitches between the dates of February 15 and March 15 of the next year."

"Right," Mr. Canfield said, "but never within five days of each other. Using a hound as a stallion too young is

unwise, and, as hunting continues during these months, it makes them watch others."

"Hell, yes!" Olds said. "Not only that, but they become lazy; not from fatness," and he looked at Brook, "but from the natural result of a new brain effort. . . . Haw! Haw! It's the same way with humans, by God! Eh? Canfield?"

Enid heard the word "Impossible!" hissed into her ear. She looked at Adam whose face was as pink as his coat. Brook now saw Olds lumbering his way and made as if to leave, but Enid said: "Be broad-minded, Adam. He won't bite you."

In an aside with her father, Enid suggested: "Get as drunk as possible, old dear, but be more tactful."

"What's up, Bibs?"

"Don't make out you don't know! Quit baiting Adam."

Olds forgot his daughter's admonition. A little later the huge painter of "The Calcareous Mud of St. Georges" strode over to his son-in-law, roaring so that all could hear:

"No one but you, Adam, would have had the luck with a brand-new pack to fall on a breast-high scent and have the fox virtually tow-rope the hounds."

Adam restrained his temper. "Were you sober during the run?"

"Damn it all, Brook, the scent was so strong I could smell it myself!"

Enid glided between the two. She was conscious that others were listening. She said: "Adam, it is the consensus that never has a pack been handled in a more workman-

like manner." She looked reprovingly at her father, who grinned.

Adam was ready to give his empire to Enid for this gesture. He elected to appear modest, and all annoyance left him with a rush. "You are too kind, dear. Let us give the dogs some of the credit."

At the word "dogs," glasses were set down and guests stared through the smoky silence. All but the novice, Pierpont Jones III., were astounded beyond words.

The booming bass voice of Courtney J. Olds broke the silence. "*Dogs!* Did you say '*dogs*,' sir?" The very word seemed to have sobered Mr. Olds for the moment. "Hounds! you mean hounds. Damn it! I may be drunk, but I won't be insulted! For Christ's sake, Brook, you call yourself a sportsman! And then you have the effrontery to call your hounds, '*dogs*!' That's what comes to a man from getting out of his class..."

Enid took her father by the arm. She whispered: "Shut up, you damned fool!" He looked down at her and was silent. She said to the guests: "Drink up!" She moved among them with magnetic grace and her laughter relieved the tension.

Enid sent her father home at the very first opportunity. He kept feeling drunker and drunker as he rode in the Brook motor. The chauffeur heard him muttering: "Dogs! Dogs!" Four servants lifted him from the car, undressed him and put him to bed. It was none too pleasant for the servants when their pains were rewarded by such epithets as "Dogs! Dogs!"

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PART FOUR

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Chapter One

*A*DAM BROOK left the Grand Ball Room of the *Hotel Astor*, where his executives were in annual conclave, and sped to Westbury. It was his first wedding anniversary. He smiled as he sat, figuratively, in the grandstand of his skull and watched himself march by. A conclave ditty, set to the tune of "Jingle Bells," still lingered in his ears. It had been written by a young Chicago representative of Brook Utilities, Inc., and was sung by the assembled executives as they beat against water tumblers with knives, forks and spoons. How did the words go?

"Hail, A.B.! Hail, A.B.!

He's our Chief, I say.

He's a sport—a jolly sort—

We'll strive for him. Hooray!"

An up and coming bunch, those *Brookol* men. Loyal and true blue. They had presented him with a set of ivory and ebony chessmen as a token of their esteem. Their applause certainly had not been forced as Brook gave his speech (written by Noble J. Nimms) in which he described life as a chess game and had said: "Let us not be pawns,

but players of the game." He was particularly proud of the lines he had injected into the Nimms' product: "God intended that all men should work. He feeds the little birds, but He doesn't throw food into their nests!"

He frowned as his town car was held up on Queensboro Bridge. The day so far had been one of triumph, but he was beset by forebodings. He recalled his ghastly oversight in having married Enid on October twenty-first.... It was on October twenty-first that the French Fleet had been destroyed by Nelson in the Battle of Trafalgar, securing to England the sovereignty of the seas. A stupid error, that wedding date!

He was repeating the word "Trafalgar" when he became impatient with traffic. Two police officers—one on foot opposite the entrance to Welfare Island, the other straddling a motorcycle—were endeavoring to free Brook's car from the tangle. His position as Honorary Deputy Police Commissioner demanded at least that much effort.

The officers were unable to extricate the Brook car. The rear wheels of a hearse prevented. He would be glad when the City bored vehicular tunnels beneath the East River. Too much funeral business on the Bridge. To his right and behind the hearse, there was an open car in which floral pieces were heaped high.

"I could have chosen a more fitting date than October twenty-first," he mused. "An earlier date, say October twelfth, the anniversary of the treaty of peace at Vienna, when Francis I ceded various frontiers...." His thought-cord snapped like the overstretched string of a ukulele. His eye had caught a big yellow anchor among the floral pieces in

the funeral car. Who was imitating *his* brand of mourning? He looked more attentively. It *was* his funeral offering! The initial "B," wrought in blue blooms, was on the huge yellow anchor. He didn't recall any of *his* deaths recently. Still, Ellen Gage looked after such matters, keeping a list of ill persons; wiring them in Brook's name, and, in case of mortality, using her discretion in sending the great floral anchors.

Brook picked up the speaking tube. "Find out who's dead."

The chauffeur relayed the command to the footman, who interrogated the rum-faced driver of the flower-car. The pilot of that vehicle, straining at the wheel as traffic began to crawl again, shouted a lusty "Nuts!"

"What did he say?" Brook asked.

"He said he didn't know, Mr. Brook."

Brook settled back uneasily. Perhaps Judge Webb was right about that will. He would make one. But he had hoped to have had an heir by now. He had been waiting until he had a little King of Rome that he could crown in a cradle. He must speak to Enid about it once more, no matter if she did behave most unbecomingly. And if that damnable father-in-law butted in, he'd throw him out for good. He wouldn't put him out himself. He'd call on the servants, as many as were needed, to handle the big lecher, who should have been in Tahiti months past.

Brook played with a small gray package, longing to open it again. In it was a diamond and sapphire bracelet. The anniversary present. Enid was healthy and normal. Dr. Corbett said so. She had a supple body, rather long

of waist and ideal for child-bearing. She shouldn't be afraid. It was a simple thing, after all. Nothing dangerous about it in these modern, efficient times. Brook let his hand fall on two volumes treating on the beauties of motherhood. Why did she fly into such rages when he brought her literature of this sort? Was he harboring a Josephine?

Perhaps he should ask her to reconsider her refusal to accompany him abroad. He had presented the French Government with half a million dollars for repairs on Napoleon's palace at Fontainebleau. He had been invited by the Premier to deliver a speech at that historic ground. What an environment for conception!

The car was passing the lodge gate of *Bonnybrook*. He would go to Enid immediately, holding the bracelet behind his back. Then he would snap it on her wrist, kissing her as she looked at the gleaming stones. Then he would give her the books that rang with praises of obstetrical submission. Later, and as the guests were leaving, he would ask Dr. Corbett to remain overnight. The doctor would add professional plaudits in regard to child-bearing.

Brook, carrying the gray jewel case, was followed by the footman. The footman was holding the chess set and the books, peering discreetly at the title of one of them: "I Want a Baby." Adam called out: "Enid! Enid, my dear! *Surpri-i-i-z-z-e-e!*" Adam dismissed the footman. He went from one huge room to another.

Godchaux came from the kitchen, where he had been soothing the cook's injured feelings. He came in response to the calls of "*Surpri-i-i-z-z-e-e!*"

"Where's Mrs. Brook, Godchaux?"

"Mrs. Brook went to the city at half after three."

Brook's jaw sagged. "Did she leave a message?"

"She said there was a meeting of The Fund, sir."

Enid, to relieve her boredom, had assumed the chairmanship of The East Side Children's Fund. They were raising money for milk-depots in the Ghetto.

"Did she say when she expected to return?"

"She was rather indefinite, sir."

"But the guests, Godchaux! They'll be here any minute...."

"Perhaps I shouldn't repeat what I heard, sir, but..."

"You're working for *me*, Godchaux. Speak up."

"Very well, then. The housekeeper heard Mrs. Brook telephoning the invited persons, saying the evening was cancelled on account of Master Archie's illness."

Brook moved up and down on his toes. He snapped: "What's wrong with him this time?"

"A dyspepsia, I fancy. I wish you would have someone speak to him, sir."

"Be more explicit, Godchaux."

"You won't think me impertinent, sir?"

"Out with it, Godchaux! Omit nothing."

Godchaux lowered his voice. "The day was a most hectic one, sir. First off, Master Archie climbed the roof and became clogged in the north chimney after casting several tiles down the flue. It was impossible for the gardener, who brought a scaling ladder, to dislodge Master Archie, what with the boy brandishing a hatchet and threatening to strike out with it."

"Then what?"

"Then his father, sir, who, as you know, is working in the outbuilding with what he terms his 'diving-sphere,' came out and turned in an alarm for the fire department. The department responded and a crowd gathered. The Chief climbed up and cast a rope about Master Archie, such as I have seen the American cowboys do at the cinema."

"Where was my wife at this time?"

"She was out riding, sir."

"Then what happened?"

"I'd rather not say more, sir, begging your pardon."

"You are doing your duty. Proceed."

"Thank you, sir. Mr. Olds climbed up to the driver's seat of the red fire-lorry while the Chief and his men were busied with Master Archie. Before one could say 'Oliver Cromwell,' Mr. Olds and the fire-lorry were off for a spin. The vehicle and Mr. Olds crashed through your largest hot-house, sir, the one where the orchids are."

Brook groaned. "Was the green-house damaged?"

"It's a bit of a mess, sir. But Mr. Olds wasn't hurt, except for lacerations of the neck and..."

"Never mind Olds. Was he drunk again?"

"He's in his room now. A bit indisposed, I should fancy."

Brook flipped the gray jewel-case to a table. "Go on. What did the brat do next?"

Godchaux cleared his throat. "After Master Archie—as sooted as any sweep—was uncorked from the flue, he cursed roundly while the impertinent spectators outside

the grounds cheered. Then, sir, he turned on his governess with his spleen—and by the way, sir, she is giving notice.”

“His stupid father thought it smart, of course! What were his words?”

“The father’s or Master Archie’s?”

“Both. What did the boy say?”

“A number of derogatory things, sir. Most of them were unintelligible. The valet, Cocker, heard it best, sir. Would you be good enough to interrogate him on this score?”

“All right. Then what did the little devil do?”

“He went to the kitchen where Brigham had just frosted and decorated the anniversary cake. He cut off an enormous portion. He ruined it, quite, and it is all I can do to persuade Brigham from giving notice.”

“And?”

“Master Archie ate so much of the cake that he suffered a distemper.”

“When did my wife hear of all this?”

“She galloped up in time to see and hear her father set off a loud petard in his work-shop. It was most nerve-racking, what with everyone at top pitch. As the blast subsided, it was seen that his building was caved in and his diving-sphere dismantled.”

“Good God! A maniac!”

“He was calling out to the mistress that he had changed his mind and was going to Tahiti with only his regular diving suit and his helmet. ‘To hell with the diving-sphere!’ were his words, as I recall it. I was highly nervous, sir, and you will pardon my state.”

"What did my wife say or do?"

"Must I tell, sir?"

Brook glowered. "Yes. Don't spare anyone."

"Very good then. Mrs. Brook stood there and laughed so loud that I fancied she had a hysteria. Then, in the hearing of all the servants and those persons who were having a show of it at the hedge-barrier, she... Must I go on, sir?"

"Every word!"

"She called out to her father...really, Mr. Brook, it is most embarrassing for me, and on thinking it over, I'd rather give notice myself than go on. You see I served long in the household of Sir Eric Grennell, and..."

"Godchaux, you are staying on at an increase in salary. Now proceed."

"Well, Mrs. Brook stood there, laughing and brandishing her crop. Then she called to her father: 'Atta boy, Old Sea-beast! Blow up the whole God damned place! Blow up this House that Junk built!'"

Brook recoiled as though struck by a whip. "Did she say *that*, Godchaux?"

"I regret that she did, sir. It is most embarrassing and has put us all in a funk." Brook turned to leave. Godchaux remembered something. "One thing more, Mr. Brook, the mistress telephoned all the guests to stay away except Dr. Corbett. She instructed him to come as soon as he could to examine Master Archie."

"To hell with him!" Brook went to his suite, taking with him the gray jewel case, clenching it as though to

crush it. Then he rang for his valet. He wanted all the terrible picture, now that the curtain had been lifted.

"Cocker," he said, "tell me, and don't hesitate; what was it that Archie said when he was jerked out of the chimney?"

"Why, nothing, sir! Nothing much at all."

Brook's eyes were gimlets. "Don't lie, Cocker! You were there and you heard."

Cocker was shaking like an electric vibrator. "I don't dare repeat it, sir, it was that horrible."

"Cocker!"

"He cursed worse than any navvy, sir. Then he said something which was quite a mystery to us all. He said it to his father, who was petting his sooty head."

"Said what?"

"He said: 'What kind of a *jail* was he in?'"

Brook gagged. He mastered himself. "Anything else?"

"Nothing, except the mistress slapped his jowls and told him to hold his tongue. Master Archie cursed her, too, and said: 'You can't fool me! I heard you and Pop say he was there once. And I heard you say you were married to the "ass in Midsummer Night's Dream." What did you mean, "ass"?'"

Cocker was startled by the effect of his report. "Is there something wrong, sir? You look done-in."

It seemed that an interminable darkness settled over Brook. When he came from his daze, he was on his bed, the gray jewel case still in his hands. Dr. Corbett was leaning over him.

"Who told them?" he was asking thickly. "What do they know?"

Dr. Corbett was looking into his eyes. "There, A.B., you're coming 'round."

Brook lay still for a time. Then he felt the gray case in his palm. He lifted it, looked at it a moment and then handed it to Dr. Corbett. "For Mrs. Corbett, Doctor. With my compliments."

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Chapter Two

A *ADAM BROOK* went to Ellen Gage in his time of tribulation. As always, when danger threatened, he felt closer to her than to anyone else. He told her the whole story, without reservation. He had left *Bonnybrook* the night of the hectic anniversary, going to his pent-house with the demons of his past whistling in his ears and the specter of that past looming large before his eyes.

Ellen Gage and Adam were on one of the exquisitely landscaped terraces flanking the pent-house. Brook had not gone to his office for three days. Dr. Corbett was to call again today with a report on certain tests he had made at Adam's request. Brook had refused to answer the telephone when Enid called.

Adam was clad in a sport costume that he always wore while working in the miniature gardens on the roof of *Brook Towers*. Whenever emotionally unbalanced, he found renewed strength as he dipped his hands in earth or handled the leaves of plants. In the late autumn, and with the sap gone from the boughs, he was clipping back his shrubs as Ellen watched.

"You were right not to stir up a scene," Ellen said. "I think most of what the child said was an accident. Just chance remarks."

He leaned down to pull a plantain-weed. "They've found out," he said. "How, I don't know. My God, Ellen, what can I do?"

"Let us suppose the worst possible thing should happen. Let us suppose they do know everything and that they publish it in the papers. Well, you still would be Adam Brook."

"Don't try to minimize it, Ellen."

"I'm not. Only I think you are a man of extraordinary courage and ability. You must behave like one."

"You're unkind."

"No. The trouble with me is I'm too kind. I often want to show you the truth, but I usually hesitate for fear of hurting you."

He glanced at her keenly. "I am beginning to understand, Ellen."

She let his observation go unanswered. Still, she felt thrilled. She watched him snip back his shrubs and wondered what was passing through his mind. Suddenly he turned to her again. "Ellen, there is another man somewhere...there must be!"

"You mean your wife is in love with someone else?"

He nodded. "Don't you think so?"

"I haven't the right to interfere, Adam. I don't know what to think."

"There *must* be another man." He snipped his pruning-shears viciously. "I'll find him!" He snipped again. "And

I'll grind him with my heels.... Then she'll come to me on her knees."

"Don't go off half-cocked, Adam." Then she added: "May I offer a suggestion?"

"Yes, of course."

"My suggestion is that you take up your marriage relations again where you thought they had left off...."

"I couldn't, Ellen. My pride..."

She spoke forcefully. "To the devil with your pride! That's your chief fault, Adam. You don't know where pride leaves off and solid sense begins." He was silent. "Perhaps they know nothing. Perhaps, everything. The important thing is for you not to let them find out that *you* know they know. Go about your business. Go ahead to Europe and make your speech. Let time work out the problem."

He stood there thinking. "Perhaps you are right. I don't want any gossip to get into the papers."

"Then call her up or go to her. If there is another man, you will know it in time. Then you can act. You are always saying, 'To govern is to foresee.' Well, do some foreseeing now."

Dr. Corbett was announced and came upon the terrace. Ellen left them looking at a hedge-like row to which a few large pears and apples still clung in the face of coming winter.

Adam noticed the physician's mystified gaze. "Rather odd, this fruit, isn't it?"

"Just what is it, A.B.?"

"These flat, vine-like growths on the trellises actually are fruit trees."

"You don't mean to tell me!"

"I take trees, dwarf and warp them. By cutting them back each year and lashing them, I am able to produce absolutely flat trees."

"Remarkable! Never saw anything like it before."

Brook waved his pruning-shears. "I am able to have a number of fruit trees that ordinarily would take up an enormous amount of room."

"Do they yield as well as the regular tree?"

"You can see for yourself the size of the fruit. Here, try an apple. These trees not only bear oversize fruit, but the yield is even more copious than that of the regulation tree. I bend them to my will. I challenge space. My winding paths give an illusion of a big garden, whereas it is less than a third of a city block in area."

Dr. Corbett had bitten into the apple. "The flavor is delicious. I presume the trees would tend to resume normal shape if left to themselves."

"The idea then is not to leave things to themselves. Let's go inside." Adam said in passing that he was adhering to his diet and that he had lost two inches at the waist. "Come to my rooms while Cocker draws my bath, Doctor."

Dr. Corbett watched the valet help Brook out of the garden togs. "You are in good physical condition, A.B."

"Never did anything to abuse it," Brook replied. "I've lived a clean life. How did the tests turn out? Normal, of course."

Dr. Corbett waited until Cocker had gone to the bathroom. "You are organically sound and your blood-stream is normal."

"But the other thing?"

Dr. Corbett looked at the ceiling. "I guess you will have to adopt a child, A.B."

Brook fumbled at the lapels of his dressing gown. "What's that?"

"Unfortunately, A.B., you are sterile."

Brook was unable to speak for a moment. Then he almost roared. "Impossible! Damn it! I am as potent as any man alive! Maybe more so than most."

Dr. Corbett raised his hand. "Hold tight, Brook. I didn't say you were impotent."

"I should say I'm not. Just because I don't chase around with lewd women, bragging and demonstrating the power to commit adultery..."

"Wait a minute, A.B. As your physician, I must give you the facts. I didn't say you were impotent. I said you were lacking in the necessary cells..."

"Get this straight, Corbett, science or no science, I am the equal of any man in America, and at any..."

"Don't you want my report?"

"I want a *genuine* report—not guesswork!"

Dr. Corbett rose. "This is extraordinary, Adam. You can warp your fruit trees and bend them to your will, but when you question my professional ability...well, you have the right to change physicians." He added: "But **not** the right to insult me! Good day."

Adam followed him. "I apologize, Doctor. Consider

the nervous tension I am under. You, of all men, know my innermost secret, my wish to have a child to carry on my work. Won't you reconsider?"

The doctor sat down again. "I understand, Adam. But I must state once again that my microscope and I find you lacking the vital germ. It has nothing to do, so far as we know, with a man's potency. Many a king has been in a like predicament. Often the unfruitfulness of a union is blamed on the woman, whereas it is the man's deficiency that is at fault. Sometimes it is venereal disease..."

"All the microscopes this side of hell couldn't show that I have had such a disease!"

"You are quite right. It is not from that. Still, you must know that such diseases can be innocently acquired—although it is comparatively rare. Now, your case..."

Brook was groaning. "Is it really true?"

"There isn't a chance that you will become a father. So face the fact and reconcile yourself."

"What in God's name brought this on me? I've always been clean. Damn it! I came to my wife a virgin. I've never known another woman."

"I remember once you said you had mumps."

"Yes."

"How old were you?"

"Sixteen or seventeen. Why?"

"Did you have pains elsewhere than in the region of the throat?"

Adam recalled the time vividly. "I had terrible swellings."

The physician nodded. "Quite a few cases of sterility

come from mumps. In women, the breasts are apt to be affected if mumps are contracted after puberty. With men, unless they lie very quiet during the siege, the trouble descends. In such cases—although not always—there are clotures of ducts and sterility is induced. Lacking other evidence, your deficiency is from the mumps.”

“Is there no cure?”

“In so far as we know there is nothing that can rectify the condition.”

Brook glared. Cocker announced the tub was ready. Brook told him to go. “There must be a cure, Doctor. There *must* be!”

“Why don’t you adopt a child?”

“Adopt one! Damn it, I want one of my own to perpetuate my name and my work.”

“Childless marriages can be happy.”

“I’m not thinking of happiness. I’m thinking what a terrible thing it is to be incomplete. To be . . . to be sterile!”

“You should be grateful for your general good condition and for your wife’s health.”

“There’s got to be a cure for this, Doctor. I demand a cure!”

The physician gestured. Adam touched him on the shoulder. “I commission the staff at *Brook Medical Center* to begin research work immediately. I’ll set aside a fund. A big fund. Call in experts. Spare no expense.”

“It’s not in my line, A.B. I refuse to spend your money foolishly. Other things are needed. Other things are more important. . . .”

“What *could* be more important?”

Dr. Corbett replied: "Cancer, for one thing. That's more important."

"Do you mean it is more important than being sterile? More important than being unable to give life?"

Dr. Corbett rose to leave. "Take your bath, Adam. If you ever had a cancer, you'd know what was important."

Brook went to his bath, stripped off his dressing gown and saw himself in the mirror. He turned from the image as though it sickened him.... Sterile! No little King of Rome to be crowned in the cradle.

Chapter Three

BEFORE departing for Fontainebleau, Adam Brook established in his two households an espionage system that would have done credit to the Secret Service. Suspicions that "another man" lurked in the shadow became doubly disturbing, now that he knew that he was sterile.

Brook tried substituting detectives as servants here and there, with annoying results. One operative, working as an assistant gardener, was discharged from *Bonnybrook's* hot-houses for inefficiency. The head gardener insisted that the new man actually had tried to plant roses upside-down. Godchaux, a man of rare tact, was more than butler now. He was a concierge who made secret reports to Brook.

Brook, endeavoring to follow Ellen Gage's advice regarding marital life, was unable to conceal a half-expectant, fearful expression when with Enid. She, however, was more gay than ever, working hard for The Fund and riding with break-neck abandon across country.

Whenever there was an evening at home—which was rather seldom for Enid—she and her father turned on the radio and danced together madly. Even on the night when

the representative of the Anti-Saloon League called, she refused to quiet down. Her laughter and the bellowings of the deep-sea painter rolled through all the house. The caller cocked an ear. Was there a tinkling of glasses and a clinking of ice?

Enid noted her husband's changed manner, his wistful, almost beaten gaze. She explained to her father that it was "Adam's obstetrical look." She added: "He keeps looking to see if I'm that way. I'd go crazy if I didn't raise hell all the time."

"There's nothing better for the gall-bladder than some serious hell-raising." Mr. Olds lifted his glass and expanded his massive chest. "A few women would cure all my troubles."

She tossed off her drink. "Hurry and dress. Don't get absent-minded and put on a diving suit."

"Why not? It's going to be wet tonight."

"As wet as hell! The world's all wet."

When father and daughter passed Adam Brook, he was rehearsing his speech for Fontainebleau. He had just mumbled the preamble (Noble J. Nimms, collaborator) in the words of The Emperor himself: "Ambition is what spurs on the French." He heard a titter and hastily dropped the manuscript and picked up a seed-catalogue.

"Good night, Adam," she called across the room as she took her father's arm.

He rose and went to her: "You might tell me where you are going."

"I might but I can't, because I don't know." A hard tone crept into her voice. "Listen, Adam. Don't be so

nosey. You've been listening in on my telephone conversations and I don't like it. Another thing; don't open any more of my personal mail."

"You might have asked me to go with you," Adam said, pretending to ignore her accusations.

"You don't dance," she said. "My father does, and I love to dance." She turned to her father. "Come on, Moby Dick, let's step!"

Mr. Olds gazed stolidly at Adam. "Good night, Brook. Thar she blows!"

Brook sat up until three o'clock in the morning. He then retired but could not sleep. He had visions of simpering, flashy men bending over Enid's hand, kissing it. He called for his man.

"Mix me a bromide, Cocker."

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Chapter Four

ADAM sailed for Europe ostensibly to deliver the Fontainebleau address. He had other, highly secretive objectives, however, concerning which he hardly confided to himself. One was to receive at the hands of Monsieur Lacroix of The Louvre the specially compiled Chronology of The Emperor's Life. It had been two years in the making. The other and still more delicate mission was an interview with Sigmund Freud. Perhaps the eminent psychoanalyst could help him re-arrange his love-life.

Brook understood of course that dreams played an unusually prominent rôle in the Freudian diagnosis. Well, he had several specimens to offer. One dream in particular—it was experienced after Cocker had given him the bromide, the time Enid had reprimanded him for opening her mail and listening to her telephone conversations.

He had dreamed he was climbing a high cliff when he was suddenly confronted by a steep and shaky board platform that crossed a bottomless ravine to another, higher cliff. He tried several times to cross, but the board swayed and he was compelled to cling to the board as he fell back. Then, and quite without rhyme or reason, he found him-

self on Columbia University campus. He could see students at windows. There were mushrooms growing on the lawn and he wanted to pick them. He had nothing to put the mushrooms in, however, not having a hat, and his clothes being grotesquely without pockets. He thought of carrying a few of the mushrooms in his hands, but when he touched them, they turned to powder. He went into the kitchen—fancy, a kitchen of his own home immediately off the campus!—and there was his wife. (That would be a difficult one for Professor Freud to unravel!) His wife shook her head.... Give me something to put the mushrooms in. They are very large ones, although a bit ragged at the edges.... I have nothing for you to put them in. (Enid had said that in the dream).... He saw some sacks among a pile of groceries. He went to the sacks, but they were full of potatoes and apples.... Don't take those sacks. (Enid had kept him away.) He found some paper sacks on the floor. They were empty, dirty.... While on the way back to gather mushrooms, he was suddenly in a kind of gymnasium, where there was a balcony, such as in the Romeo and Juliet scene. He tried to get to the balcony by a back stairway. It was barred. Then, on re-entering the gymnasium, he saw a rope hanging from the balcony. He climbed it hand-over-hand for a while, but it was no use. He came across a stretch of rope that was greased. He grew very weak and let go....

Adam felt silly as he awakened. The dream had made no sense at all. He promised himself to take no more bromides.

Dr. Corbett called at the pent-house several days after Adam's sailing, to treat Courtney J. Olds' gout. The diver-painter had celebrated too lustily the departure of his son-in-law.

"Better cut down on your liquor," Dr. Corbett advised.

Mr. Olds was sitting in a wheel chair and was studying a glass case in which a dozen Napoleonic hats were displayed.

"Bah!" Mr. Olds said. "I was weaned on whiskey. I didn't want you to come at all. Bibs insisted. Go on out and talk with her. See if you can cheer her up."

"What's wrong with her?"

"Go ahead and ask her. She won't listen to me any more—I who have spouted blood for the sake of art.... Oh, hell! I'm losing my ambition."

Dr. Corbett left Olds in the wheel chair and visited with Enid. He remained for lunch, talking in general, but covertly studying her. After the luncheon-things had been removed, Enid went with the doctor to the music room.

"You've been diagnosing me, haven't you, Dr. Corbett?"

"After a fashion."

"And?"

"Your nerves are a bit ragged. You drank your wine fast and you jumped when something was dropped in the butler's pantry. Tell me about yourself?"

"What is there to tell?"

"I might be able to help you."

"I don't think so."

"It's your marital relations, isn't it?"

"Of course it is, but what's to be done about it? I was damned fool enough to believe I could go through the motions. I failed. So what the hell! Will you have a fresh cigar, Doctor?"

"No. I'm through smoking for the day. . . . Does the fear of becoming pregnant worry you?"

"Don't make me laugh."

"In some of my patients there is that fear and it leads to neurotic conditions. That is why I asked."

"But if I had said, 'Yes, it does worry me,' you wouldn't have told me that my husband was sterile, would you?"

"Did he tell you?"

"No, he didn't."

"Then how did you know?"

"I know all about him. Everything. He has spied on me. I have come right back with my own spies."

Dr. Corbett remembered that the valet was in and out of the room that day he had told Adam of the sterility. "You must try to relax, Enid."

"Let's talk of something else. I've been short-changed, so we'll let it go at that."

"Just as you say."

"I suppose you've heard that I've gone in for prize fights?" Enid said.

"I did read in last Sunday's paper that your Fund was sponsoring some bouts for charity. Tell me about it. I'm a rabid fight fan."

"I have induced the Boxing Commission to reinstate Wild Cat Terry Becker. He was barred, you know, six

months back. We want him to box Gunboat Gilbert for the Fund in January."

"I'll not miss that one. At Madison Square Garden?"

"Yes. His manager, Ernie Cripps, is coming here today with the final word about Becker's willingness to fight. You see it really is a championship bout, and by rights an outdoor attraction, as they say."

"Yes, I know. When Dick Fleury became a heavy-weight, it left the light-heavyweight title open. Well, Enid, I have to operate at three."

"Stay around, Doctor. It's not two yet. We may get some laughs."

Godchaux entered to announce that Mr. Cripps was calling from downstairs.

"Don't go," she said to Dr. Corbett. "Cripps is a character and I may need you to set my ribs.... You know, I don't want to bring up a painful subject, but Adam wanted to take over the management of the Fund. He offered to donate all the money himself. Oh, hell! What would the point be in that? Anyway, he'd want his name on every milk depot.... He'd be furious if he knew I was mixing with prize-fighters and their managers."

"I want to talk to you, Enid, when you're more relaxed. Suppose we make it tomorrow? No, I can't do that, either. I have five operations. How about next day?"

The elevator mechanism was humming. Enid spoke with restraint. "We don't need to talk much. I can tell you now what's going to happen."

Dr. Corbett was uneasy. "Yes. Well?"

"You're his physician. All right. Then you tell him

and tell him straight that he never must come to my bedroom again."

"You're not yourself today. Quit thinking about it."

"That's just it. I *am* myself, and I'm going to stay myself! He bungled the first night. He has bungled ever since. Night after night. I'm through! Tell him that."

"Here now, don't make it seem worse than..." The elevator door was heard to open. Mr. Cripps was shown in and almost took the count amid the luxurious surroundings. Dr. Corbett shook hands with Cripps and said he had seen Becker fight.

"Then you seen the best there is, Doc." Mr. Cripps talked from one side of his mouth, as though the opposite side were buttoned.

The doctor was looking at his watch. "I'd like to stay, Enid, but I have to operate at three."

"What ails the party you're going to hide a sword in, Doc?"

Dr. Corbett laughed. "Sinus."

Mr. Cripps rapped his forehead. "I know. Becker has the same trouble. It's the front of the head above the bugle, ain't it?"

"That's right. Bring him to Brook Medical Center and we'll look him over."

"You couldn't drag him to no hospital with the twenty-mule-team-borax."

"He shouldn't let it go, Cripps."

"Becker's awful bull-headed. He is scrambled six months ago in an auto smash. They take him to a Pain-Laundry

in Akron. They claim he has a busted bone near the sinus. Well, as soon as the Florence Nightingale leaves the room, Terry ups and takes it on the lam through a window and down a fire-escape. He is dressed in one of them white night-shirts, too, and no shoes. And where do I find him after looking half the night?"

"Where?" Enid asked.

"Twisting with a crazy broad at a dance-academy. He's a swell dancer, Mrs. Brook." Mr. Cripps paused. "I seen the Cat about the Gilbert bout and he says it is O.K. with him. We'll sign up in the Garden offices tomorrow. I hope he'll do some training, for he's had a long layoff."

"Does he dislike training?" asked Enid.

"Hates it, Mrs. Brook. But then who does like it? Usually he don't have to train much on account of fighting so often. He averages about thirty battles a year and sometimes more. He figures it keeps him at his peak to fight all the time. He's a phenomenum all right."

Mr. Cripps caught Enid smiling. "I get you, Mrs. Brook. I pulled the wrong word, didn't I? Terry's always panning me for talking over my head. For a kid that's had little schooling, he shoots pretty good grammar."

"What was the inside reason for his being barred?" asked Dr. Corbett.

"I don't want to blow no police whistle, but it is politics. I don't care to say no more on the subject, only no racketeers can muscle in on Terry Becker."

"The Commissioners told me, when I asked for the reinstatement," Enid said, "that he was barred for not giving his best efforts in the Duffy bout."

"That's malarkey, Mrs. Brook, but don't quote me. Terry is hard to handle and he has no tack. He should of pushed Birdlegs Duffy over in four rounds at the outside, but what does he do? One of the sports writers, I ain't saying which one—for they're my pals—gets drunk and picks Duffy to stand my boy on his ear inside of ten rounds. I try to explain to Terry that it is a mistake, but he ain't got an ounce of tack."

Mr. Cripps inhaled his cigarette thoughtfully. "Well, the Cat goes into battle and begins to lose nine straight rounds, deliberate. He won't listen to me between rounds and when the referee asts him to extend hisself, he yells that the referee's father is a bachelor. He keeps on being outpointed. Then, in the tenth and final round, and while I am dying with heart failure—I got a bum ticker, Doc—I hear Terry shout his world-famous battle cry."

Enid wanted to know what the world-famous battle-cry was.

"Mrs. Brook," Cripps said, "whenever Terry is ready to put over his crusher, usually a left hook, he shouts: 'Here goes nothing!' They're as good as embalmed when he yells that. Well, like I was saying, Terry yells: 'Here goes nothing.' Then he uncorks a short left to the whiskers. The next thing I know, Birdlegs Duffy is sitting in the lap of the sports writer who picked him to cop the duke. Duffy is knocked out for three hours. Now that's tackless and we get such a panning that the Commission puts the poison label on us. . . . Don't get me wrong, though. Terry Becker is as right as your side of the Civil War."

"Becker always interested me," Dr. Corbett said, "not only physically, for he is a marvelous specimen, but psychologically."

Mr. Cripps fidgeted. "You got me stopped there, Doc. I know him up and down, in and out, but I never discuss his experiences with dames."

It was difficult for the doctor to contain himself. He looked at Enid, who seemed ready to collapse. Then he said: "He's a furious fighter and he's very game."

"He has the three things a champion's got to own, Doc. Arms, legs and a heart. And he didn't pick that heart up in no gymnasium."

Mr. Cripps illustrated Terry's gameness by recalling the night he fought Lefty Flynn in Boston. "The Cat sometimes has trouble with left-handers." He turned to Enid. "Left-handed fighters box with their right-hand extended, Mrs. Brook." She nodded and he continued: "Well, in the very first round, Lefty leads with a rainbow right that wouldn't of tagged your grandma. But the Cat takes the sucker punch flush on the puss. It knocks loose a bridge and when I pull it out in the corner, the blood begins to flow plenty. To stop the blood, I have to jam the bridge back where it come from, but it keeps falling down. For thirteen rounds the Cat has to hold that bridge up with his tongue. Now if he had of been hit onct in the jaw, he would of bitten his tongue in two."

"Did he win?" Enid asked.

"In the thirteenth round he takes his tongue from the bridge long enough to say: 'Here goes nothing!' A left to

the body to bring Flynn's guard down. Then a right-cross. Blooey! Curtains!" Mr. Cripps added reverently. "You'd simply love the Wild Cat, Mrs. Brook."

"I'm certain of it," Enid said.

Chapter Five

NOVEMBER snow flurried against the casement as Enid breakfasted in bed. It was her father's fifty-sixth birthday. They had agreed not to celebrate with their usual hilarity on account of Brook's homecoming. He was due on the *Ile de France* today. A wireless message that lay on Enid's breakfast tray advised that the liner had been held up by storms and could not possibly dock before midnight.

There was the noise of hammers coming from the reception hall. The servants were unpacking a massive crate that had come yesterday from the Customs warehouse. Brook cabled concerning it, asking that the Tenth Century saint, carved in wood, be unpacked and placed in the reception hall, facing the elevator. It was a present from the French in recognition of his Fontainebleau gesture.

The maid lifted the breakfast tray and helped Enid dress. It was almost noon when she went to her father's bedroom to greet him on his birthday. She found him submerged in ten fathoms of slumber. One of his ponderous legs protruded from the covers. He woke up suddenly with porpoise-like flounderings.

"What the hell, Bibs! I was dreaming of a girl."

"Happy birthday, Casanova!" she said, kissing him.

Mr. Olds cocked his ears: "What in hell is all the racket about?"

"It's that wooden saint Adam sent from Paris. They're unpacking it. Put on a dressing gown and we'll go look."

Olds sighed wheezily. "Let me take a cold shower first. Suppose the thing turns out to be Brook himself?"

"Come on, Henry the Eighth! You can bathe afterward."

They found Godchaux in one of his "funks." Cocker was on the floor, searching for something. The housekeeper was pawing through a mountain of excelsior-packing. The wooden figure, brown and forbidding, and with one hand upraised stiffly in blessing, stood against the wall. One of its eye-sockets was occupied by a glass orb. The other socket was blank. The effect was so startling that Mr. Olds ordered a whiskey and soda at once.

"We're looking for the other glass eye," Godchaux explained.

"I don't think there was two eyes," Cocker said.

"I distinctly heard something drop," Godchaux said.

Olds interjected. "It might have been his monocle, Godchaux."

The butler considered this possibility but shook his head. "I hardly think so, sir. A monocle when dropped has a sort of skithery, sliding sound. I fancy a glass eye would have more of a bouncing pop to it."

"Was the noise you heard bouncy and poppy?" Olds asked.

"Exactly, sir."

Olds looked at Godchaux earnestly. "Did you ever hear of St. Vitus?"

The butler inclined his head thoughtfully. "It seems I have, sir, but you see I am Low Church myself."

"Never mind. There *was* a St. Vitus—a rather famous dancer, too. He originated the fox-trot but never got credit for it. Well, St. Vitus..." Olds detected Cocker grinning. "Now, Cocker, perhaps you know of St. Vitus?"

"Ain't it a disease, sir?"

Olds frowned. "How can you say that, Cocker, in the very presence of St. Vitus himself? No wonder he has his hand upraised as though to strike you."

"Quit stringing them," Enid said. "Get your breakfast."

In leaving the hall, Olds said to Godchaux: "St. Vitus had only one eye. He was the son of Cyclops."

Godchaux gave an order to his assistants: "Never mind looking further. Clean up the mess." He mumbled to himself: "I certainly heard a bouncing pop."

As he ate his poached eggs, Olds kept up a rambling monologue concerning Brook's homecoming and Brook's influence. "Damn it, Bibs! I wish to Christ you would leave Brook. Let's have a drink. I get weak thinking of him. Do you know what he has done? He has deflated me. Look at me! An artist. I *was* an artist. What am I now? A hollow shell. God damn him! He's coming home to-night. I wish to God they'd scuttle the ship. I scuttled a ship once. Damned if I didn't. A small vessel, *The Mazie*, Captain Birthwhistle in command. I hated his name almost as much as I hated Lieutenant Lahr's adenoids. Birth-

whistle! I've had to stay clear of Java ever since.... That wooden saint looks dissipated. One eye! I had a valet with one eye when I was in Gibraltar. He stole my rum. I kept two kinds of rum on my sideboard. I poured out the rum and procured some Seidlitz powders. You know what they are? There's a blue-papered powder and a white-papered powder and when you mix them they effervesce. I put some tea in the rum bottles to give them natural colors. I put a gross of white-paper powders in one bottle. Then in the other bottle I put a gross of the blue-papered powders. When I came to my quarters that night, my one-eyed valet was on the floor. He had taken the supposed rum from both bottles; the medicine was effervescing *inside* him! I'd like to give Seidlitz to Brook. He's stifling me. I don't know what it is he does or says. I can't put my finger on any specific thing. But he has made marine painting seem useless. The smug bastard! I have half a mind not to go to Tahiti at all!"

"Have some more marmalade," Enid said.

"Christ! Must I be licked by a midget? Me who fanned the backside of Lieutenant Lahr with a broadsword? Me that has spouted blood as no other man ever did! What good would it do for me to go to Tahiti? I couldn't paint."

"Yes, you could, too. You ought to go."

"Shut up! How can you know how futile I am? Every time I would look through my helmet-glass, what would I see? Would I be able to interpret the mysteries of the coral seas? The battles of crayfish and the duels of giant crabs and squids? Not by a hell of a sight! I'd see only millions of faces, and every face would be Brook's.

Get me another drink. I'm going to anæsthetize my soul with liquor."

"Let's not give him the satisfaction of seeing you drunk tonight."

"Oho! So he's got you licked, too?"

"He'll never lick me."

"Look at you! Just look at you! You're afraid of him."

"You lie!"

"Go on. Get mad. I hope to God you get mad as hell. Anything except standing there like a betrayed wench, trembling because that little runt is coming home. I'm a hollow shell and you're getting more and more like your mother every day."

"For God's sake, shut up or I'll claw your eyes out!"

"Go claw the other eye out of the wooden saint. That's what he wants to make of you. A wooden saint. He wants the whole world to be full of them. All wood. God Almighty, Bibs, you used to have fire! But he's licked us both. You used to be the most spirited little devil in the world. Bar none. You were sexy and full of hell. Every time you came into a room the pictures vibrated on the wall."

Enid held her head high, but there were tears on her cheeks. "I'd rather die than see your spirit broken," she said.

"He's sapping my vitality, Bibs. Leave him. Tell him tonight that we're leaving him for good. If I've got to be a Prometheus, chained to a rock, I want an eagle to attack my bowels—not a sparrow like Brook pecking away at my navel."

"Come on, damn you! We'll raise hell and we'll begin right now. Drink up! Here's to Freedom! Here's to us!"

Olds smote the table with his great fist. "Spoken like my own fiery little wench! And don't ever let down again." He roared for Godchaux. "Send in a St. Bernard dog."

Godchaux was bewildered. "Forgive me, sir, but what may you mean?"

"Send in a St. Bernard dog, Godchaux. They have barrels of rum under their chins. Damn it! When you are lost in the Alps, a St. Bernard dog rescues you. He carries rum under his chin. Send in that dog, Godchaux."

"Very good, sir."

At four o'clock in the afternoon, there was a telephone call for Enid. In talking she hesitated for a moment, then she said: "Come on over and join the birthday party."

Olds was roaring: "Godchaux! Send in another St. Bernard dog!"

Chapter Six

*W*ILD CAT TERRY BECKER, in faded red tights and blue trunks, stood near the ropes of the gymnasium ring while a trainer untied the big practice gloves. Then he shadow-boxed for three minutes while Ernie Cripps held the watch. His strong hands, bandaged with green pool-table felt, stirred the air lazily. He moved about the canvas platform, flat-footed and indifferent. The only agility he displayed was in leaping over the ropes and starting for his dressing room.

Cripps followed him. "Is that all you're going to do today?"

"I got a date."

"Won't, you punch the heavy bag for a couple of rounds?"

"What for?"

"How about working on the light bag?"

"What for?"

"Well, will you skip rope for a round or pull the weights? You ain't even worked up a sweat."

They were at the dressing room door now. "Sometimes

I get a belly-ache just looking at you, Ernie. Help me skin out of my sweat-shirt."

"Look at the gut you're putting on! For the love of God! You ain't used to these layoffs. You got to work that low-pressure tire off of your gut. If you don't, Gunboat Gilbert will knock it off."

"He won't lay a glove on me."

"Go on, then. Get hog-fat! Get your God damned belly-muscles full of bloat. Christ! Maybe I can get you in a circus if you put on a couple more pounds."

Terry was moving to the shower. "Don't lie, Cripps. I don't pay attention to abuse. But I won't stand lying. I'm not fat."

"You're getting to look more and more like Big Bill Thompson."

"Quit lying. You know I fight best at seventy-two. Well, what do I weigh?"

"A ton!"

"I weigh seventy-six. That gives me only a pound to work off to make the weight and three to work off to be in shape." A trainer was spreading a gray blanket on the leather-covered rubbing table. Terry was raising his long, corded arms beneath the water-needles.

"Give him a lot of kneading around the belly," Cripps whispered to the rubber.

Terry came dripping from the shower and stood while the rubber scruffed him briskly with a rough towel. "They say that Brook dame is a swell bit of flesh, Ernie," the Wild Cat said. "Hey, you," he said to the trainer, "leave some hide on me!"

Cripps was disconsolate. "Well, if you won't train, at least you could lay off the hootch till after the fight."

Terry went to the rubbing table. "I seen her pictures in the paper the other day. Me for society broads!"

"You're twenty-seven," Cripps said. "You're not no youngster."

Terry was stretched on his stomach. The rubber was smearing him with wintergreen liniment. He raised his black head. "Did you try to make the Brook dame, Ernie?"

"Don't go getting plastered again tonight, Terry. Jeez! The fight's six weeks off, but that don't mean you shouldn't watch your step. So help me Christ, there's so much fat on you, you look like you was coming home in a barrell!"

The trainer's hands were kneading Terry's tapering, iron legs. "Make it snappy, kid; I got a date."

Cripps was worried. "Who's the date with this time?"

"Maybe it's with that Brook dame."

Cripps groaned: "O hell! Don't be clowning around when we got a big fight. It means the title. Let's not blow the duke with the title right in our mitts."

"Would the Brook dame fall for an old man like me, Ernie?"

"By God! You're going on the road tomorrow. You gotta go on the road if I have to drag you there."

"You go on the road for me, Ernie."

"We'll trot around the Central Park reservoir. What do you say, Terry?"

The rubber asked: "Should I knead your belly some more, Champ?"

Terry said: "That's O.K. Rub the back of my neck. I feel kind of tight there."

"O.K., Champ."

"Did you say the Brook dame's husband was in Europe, Ernie?"

"Aw, nuts! I got to get some new sparring partners tomorrow. Those clucks today didn't even give you a sweat."

Kid Cooper, one of Terry's recently acquired sparring partners, came in. "Did any of youse see a protector layin' around?"

"How long you been in the game, Cooper?" Terry asked.

"I win three fights in Spokane," Cooper said. "You ain't seen my protector layin' around, did you, Champ?"

"How many fights did you lose?"

"One or two."

"Why don't you go in for some other racket, Cooper?"

Cooper looked at Terry dully. "What other racket?"

"Any other racket but this one."

"What do you say that for, Champ?"

"Well, I hate to see a guy get punch drunk. That's what is going to happen to you."

"You mean I can't make the grade?"

"Say, Cooper, you couldn't hit the floor with your hat. You can take 'em in the jaw, but what in hell for? What good'll that do you when you begin to hear broadcasting in your head all the time and your knees get loose hinges? Quit it! Get out of this damned, lousy, fake racket and be a bootlegger. Anything!"

"Then you ain't seen my protector, Champ?"

"No, I haven't seen your protector! What do you think I am? Go on home.... Hey, Ernie, slip Cooper a century and I'll give it back when I get my pants on.... Now take that dough and don't show up again. If you do, I'll beat the hell out of you."

Cooper took the hundred-dollar bill from Ernie and went out with a jerky step, mumbling: "Jeez! I wish'd I knowed who lifted my protector."

Terry had drawn his shirt on over his wedge-shaped back. "Hell, Ernie! You ask me to work out and then you hand me bums like Cooper. He's slug-nutty. He's already got the fighter's dance from forgetting to duck. I like to fight, but it's no fun training on plates of Jello."

"Well, you got your pants on; how about that century?"

"All managers is alike," Terry said. "No generosity."

"If I didn't collect, you'd only blow it on some tart. We'll have a couple of new mugs for you to muss up tomorrow afternoon. I got trouble hiring good ones. They claim you don't pull your punches."

Terry poked Cripps in the stomach. "You been holding out on me, Ernie."

"How do you get that way? You owe me dough now."

"I don't mean dough. I mean dames."

"You better keep your mind on the fight. We'll go on the road in the morning."

"You're holding out, Ernie. I mean about the Brook dame."

Mr. Cripps was disgusted. "Don't you think of nothin'

but liquor and women? Don't be a chump all your life. No. I didn't make her. You know damned well a society frail don't want no part of mugs like us."

"Do you think I never had a society dame?"

"What of it? You've had a lot of hashers, too."

"Listen, Ernie, I'm going to break a date I had with a show girl."

"It's about time you saved some vitality for the Gunner. Will you go to bed at ten tonight?"

"Bed?" Terry wrinkled his brow. "I never heard of it. Come on, Ernie, we're going to call up the Brook dame."

"Don't be a horse's..."

Terry cut in: "I got a nickel that belongs to the 'phone company. We'll use the booth out in front. Come on, grandpa."

"Don't be a sap. For the love of God! Don't you know she's class? She's not one of your Broadway tarts. She's a big society woman and married to one of the richest guys in the country."

"Then she'll appreciate what I've got."

"You ought to put in more work for the Gunner."

Terry had stepped into the telephone booth. He was there some time and came out smiling. "Well, Billy Sunday, you can scram over to the hotel. The invitation's only for one. See?"

Mr. Cripps was amazed. "You didn't get *her*?"

"We're going to have a birthday party. Now screw!"

Mr. Cripps watched the sway of the broad shoulders and the spring in Terry's step as he walked to the gym-

nasium door and then to the curb, where he hailed a taxi.

"See you tomorrow, Ernie," the Wild Cat called, "but not at the reservoir. Go get yourself a dame and come to life!"

Chapter Seven

MR. OLDS was shouting a stentorian demand for the St. Bernard dog when Godchaux reported Mr. Becker on his way up the lift. Enid told the butler to see to her father; she would go meet the guest. Godchaux feared for the worst now and longed to unbosom himself to the master.

Becker grinned as Enid held out her hand. They stood looking at each other for several seconds and she was pleased by the gentleness with which he clasped her hand. Then Becker glanced quickly about the hall. His expression was suddenly stern as he saw the Tenth Century carved saint with its single glass eye and upraised arm. Enid wondered at this reaction.

"That's an old image my husband picked up abroad. How do you like it?"

Becker laughed uneasily. "I thought at first it was One-Eyed Connolly."

They went to the great living room, where a log fire was warming the shins of the diver-painter. Mr. Olds, having spent several hours with his St. Bernard dogs, was

in rare humor. Glass in hand, he insisted on reciting lines from Virgil's *Æneid*:

*"If there be here whose dauntless courage dare
In gauntlet-fight, with back and body bare,
His opposite sustain in open view,
Stand forth thou, champion, and the games renew;
Two prizes I propose, and thus divide—
A bull with golden horns and fillets tied,
Shall be the portion..."*

Mr. Olds paused and ransacked the ceiling with his eyes for the next lines. "'Shall be the portion...' Let's see, now. 'Shall be the...' Damn it! Godchaux! Godchaux! Send in two of your biggest St. Bernards."

Enid explained her father's reference to rum-equipped dogs. The pugilist was measuring the painter of "Rise, Giant Squid." He whispered to Enid: "There's a lot of him, isn't there?"

Mr. Olds asked: "Are you a drinking athlete?"

"I'll have one with you, thanks," Terry said.

"I'm trying to remember the rest of that epic scene from the *Æneid*," Mr. Olds said. "It escapes me for the moment. Godchaux, a whiskey and soda for Mr. Becker. I remember one line: 'Stalking he strides, his head erected bears.' You drink whiskey and soda, don't you?"

"I'll take it straight if you don't mind."

"Bring him a bottle, Godchaux. Then there's another line: 'He claims the bull with lawless insolence.' It will all come to me later...."

"You've got a skinful," Enid said. "That last St. Bernard had hydrophobia."

"I was in the sub-Arctic waiting for Peary's return," Olds said, "when our lead-dog became rabid. I've still got the whip I used on the expedition. Jesus! How cold it was! Seventy-two below and daylight all the two months we were frozen-in. I'll go get the whip in a minute. You must see it. An Australian bull-whip. Well, our lead-dog failed to bite through my furs and I finally despatched him with the whip. I'll get it in a minute and demonstrate."

"You're potted to the eyes," Enid said.

"You lie like hell, Bibs! Wait till you see me work with the bull-whip. I'm a bull! We're all bulls! In a little while we'll have the dance of the bulls. It's a wonderful work, the *Æneid*, Becker. I learned it by heart while I was a student at Heidelberg. Ever been to Heidelberg?"

"I never been farther than Hoboken, Governor."

"Then how can you expect to be champion of the world if you don't know what the world is like?"

Terry wondered if he hadn't taken on too much by coming into social circles. "I don't know much of anything except fighting, I guess."

"Well, young man, it's good to have a well set-up chap in this house for a change. I was handy with the maulies in my own time and I recall when I came to scratch with Deaf Gillis, the Essex Butcher. Ever hear of him?"

"I don't read a lot, Governor."

"He was a protégé of the late Marquis of Queensberry. Weighed at least eighteen stone. I was a big 'un

myself. Here's your health, Becker. It's good to see a man of my own kind. It gives me renewed spirit. Are you German by any chance?"

"My old man was a Heinie, but my mother was Irish."

"A damned fine combination, eh, Bibs? I like your build, Becker. Wide of shoulder and lean of flank and hip. But you take short steps when you walk. Did you notice that, Bibs?"

"I pay no attention to those things," she said.

"Do you always take short steps, Becker?"

"I never notice, Governor. I just walk."

"Well, Becker, you should take longer steps. Whenever I see anybody take short steps I am reminded of a certain God damned runty midget."

Becker whispered to Enid: "Maybe I ought to beat it if you think I'm butting in."

"It's all right," she said to Becker. "He likes you or he wouldn't talk this way."

Becker was nervous and mystified. Olds continued: "I remember Mansfield, the actor. He was a little fellow. They had to make the stage furniture small so as not to show up his size. The members of his cast had to be small, too. I remember him quite well; the little runt! I'm glad you're a sizable fellow, Becker. Promise me you'll take longer steps."

"O.K., Governor, I'll spread out."

Mr. Olds shook hands with Becker. "It's a gentlemen's agreement. Now, only one more thing. Napoleon was a runt. Do you like Napoleon, Becker?"

"I never even thought about him."

"I'm asking you, Becker. Do you like Napoleon?"

Enid interrupted. "Oh, stop it! Let's have some music."

Olds was not to be shaken off. "I insist on knowing his opinion of Napoleon."

Terry shrugged. "I think Napoleon was a heel!"

Olds set down his glass and whacked Terry's back. "You and I are going to get along, Becker. We have similar tastes. We are athletes and we are artists. We cannot afford to be licked by midgets. You make me feel rejuvenated, Becker. Before you came in, my daughter and I were quarreling one minute and kissing the next. I thought I was a hollow shell. You have revived my faith in my fellow man, Becker. Drink up! I am a man again—not a mouse. Bibs, my little wench, I'm hungry. Let's have the birthday dinner now. Wine! Let us open wine. By God! I almost remembered the rest of that selection from the *Æneid*. But it has gone again. Drink up, Becker.... Godchaux! Godchaux! Lay the birthday dinner in here. To hell with the dining room! Let's be feudal. And keep those St. Bernards running like post-horses in relays."

Enid turned on the radio, dance music rising above Mr. Olds' babble. She held out her arms and Becker, greatly stirred, put an arm about her waist. Mr. Olds, slumping into a chair by the roaring fire, recalled, all at once, the lines from the *Æneid*. He bowed his head and recited poetry to his bulging chest while the couple danced.

Enid felt an exaltation as she was held close to the amazingly graceful pugilist. She had danced with many renowned exponents, but never with anyone so strong, so agile, so spirited as Becker. He moved with abandon,

like an animal; still, he was so perfectly poised and electric that she forgot the room, the night, the world.

She felt his lips at her hair, but she didn't mind. She let him hold her close, so close she could feel the ripple of his muscles. The music stopped and she looked for a brief time into his deep-set brown eyes. There was a hunger there. She went swiftly to the radio and shut off the music.

"Wouldn't you dance some more?" he asked.

"Later on, perhaps."

"Maybe I shouldn't have come," he said.

"Why not? I invited you."

He stumbled with his words. "Well, it was pretty fresh of me to call up."

"Forget it."

"I was just thinking that my kind don't belong among decent people."

She laughed so weirdly that Becker stepped back. "Decent? Who *is* decent?"

He mumbled: "I feel kind of funny."

"Oh, to the devil with the whole works! So you're afraid, are you?"

"I'm not afraid of anything."

"Yes, you are, Becker. You're afraid. Afraid of being yourself. I sort of thought you would be one person that would act natural. That's why I wanted to see you. That's why I asked you to come up. And now you're timid, just because you came here expecting a lot of high hand-shakes and fake politeness, and then you found..." she pointed

toward her father, who was beating time to his verses with an empty glass. She went on: "You found that!"

"Why, I think he's a great guy..."

She paid no attention to the remark. She put her hand on her breast. "And you found this."

"Maybe I ought to go," he said.

"Be yourself, Becker. Cut loose and raise hell. Let's be ourselves for the few hours we have left. Do you understand?"

"I can raise as much hell as anybody."

Mr. Olds dozed for half an hour and Enid talked to Terry about his career. He had led a rather dull life, he said. He had gone into boxing to escape work. He had been a tinner's helper but didn't like it. Once when they were working on an office building in Akron, he had fallen and caught hold of a girder. He had hung there twenty minutes until they got a rope to him. His strong arms had saved him. Then he went to work in an electric manufacturing plant, winding armatures. There he met Ernie Cripps, an older man with a flair for boxing.

"I wasn't much at first. Got hell beat out of me a lot. Cripps had a heavyweight named Blake. Blake kept slamming me around the gym until I thought he was yellow to do that. I refused to put on the gloves again with Blake. When he said I was dogging it, I said if I ever put on the gloves with him again I was going to kick hell out of him. He weighed ninety-six and I was only thirty-five then."

"Do you mean a hundred and ninety-six?"

"Yes. We never say the hundred. Too much work. Well, the next time I put on the gloves, I found out I had

a punch. It ruined Blake, so Cripps concentrated on me. There was a priest in Akron, Father Swazey. One hell of a fine fellow. He took an interest in me and helped straighten out my grammar some. In my first fight he prayed for me and I won. I always send him a wire when I fight and he is good luck. I slip his church a little something, too, out of each purse."

"Are you religious?"

"I don't know a thing about it. Are you?"

"I don't know a thing about it," she said. "Will you tell me something?"

"Sure. What?"

"What was it worried you when you saw the wooden saint as you came in?"

He rubbed his jaw. "What makes you think I was worried?"

"Then you don't want to tell me? All right."

"I'd rather tell you some other time."

She looked at her father who was stirring and blinking. She called to him: "The Ancient Mariner is coming up for air. Well, is your appetite good?"

Mr. Olds stood up, shook his head and remarked: "There you are, Becker. I had a rest between rounds, didn't I? By God! I dreamed that I was going to get drunk."

Godchaux brought in some wooden trestles and slabs and made a banquet table in the living room. They were hardly seated when Mr. Olds had an inspiration. "My friends," he said, "we have been ministered to for hours by those loyal St. Bernard dogs. Is it fair, I ask you, that

we should sit here and regale ourselves when St. Bernard himself stands outside, alone and no doubt as thirsty as a thousand devils? Bring him in, say I! Put him at the head of the table."

"Your sleep didn't sober you much," Enid said.

Olds rose. "I shall usher him in myself." He left the table and went towards the reception hall.

"What in hell is he going to do?" asked Terry.

Enid said: "I never saw anyone with so much vitality."

There was a crash. Terry got up. "Should I go look after him?"

She motioned for him to stay put. "He'll take care of himself. Don't worry."

Olds came staggering through the door, puffing and blowing and carrying the wooden saint in his arms. It was a huge and heavy burden, but he brought it to the table. One arm had been broken off. Terry poured himself a drink hurriedly and gulped it down.

"This is St. Bernard himself, my friends. He stopped in on his way to the oculist. He broke an arm getting here, but he says it is worth it to be with congenial company."

Olds stood the statue at the head of the table, tied a napkin about the image's neck and called to Godchaux: "Bring our illustrious guest one of his own dogs, and then open some wine."

After they had eaten for a time, Mr. Olds announced that they must wear carnival hats on so festive an occasion. "I know where to get them," he said. He left the room and returned with a number of Napoleon's hats. He

made the rounds of the table, putting a hat on the saint first, then giving one each to Enid and Terry and drawing one on himself. Terry poured himself drink after drink and kept looking at the one-eyed statue. Enid had become quiet and pensive. She drank sparingly of the wine that had been poured for her.

After the servants had cleared away the dishes and removed the table, Olds went for his Australian bull-whip and returned, whacking it and cracking it, cursing and storming and staggering.

"I lied to you, damn it!" he roared. "I said that this was St. Bernard." He stood several paces from the statue and almost hissed: "It isn't St. Bernard. It's Banquo's ghost." He whirled his big arm and with bullet-like rapidity, shot the lash at the grotesquely-hatted figure. The whip-end coiled about the neck of the statue and Olds gave a Samsonian jerk. The statue fell. Olds put it upright again. "It's not Banquo's ghost, either. It's name is Brook. Do you hear me? Brook! And now I'll beat him to death!"

Enid sat gazing fixedly at her father. Becker was trembling. Suddenly Becker reached into a silver bucket, grasped a wine bottle, drew back his arm and threw it against the statue. A bubbling stream cascaded from the wooden chin of the figure. As though a spell had been broken, Becker slumped into his chair and lowered his head.

Olds now was dancing madly about the room, cracking his bull-whip and reciting: "'Macduff was from his mother's womb untimely ripp'd'..." The whip became entangled in an antique chandelier. In freeing it, Olds brought down a shower of crystal pendants. Next he

bowled over a vase which broke on the floor. He called out that he was dancing the dance of the bulls. Then he hurled his whip to the floor, pranced and grimaced and then advanced on the statue.

"I accuse you," he muttered thickly. "I accuse you, Adam Brook, of heresy. The penalty is death by fire. Oho! You are a salamander? We shall see. Aha! You are a bishop? I shall give you a chasuble of flame, a stole of smoke; maniple, girdle and alb of bake-burn. Heretic! Heretic! Into the fire you go, Bishop Brook! A trial by fire!"

Olds was wrestling the statue, lifting it and reeling beneath its weight. Terry rose as though to restrain him, but Enid took his arm. "Don't interfere. You wouldn't understand, but he's fighting for his soul."

Olds staggered with the statue to the huge fireplace. With a howl of triumph, he rolled it to the bed of coals. "Go to sleep, Bishop Brook," he said, as though he had no audience. "Sleep on the God damned breast of the fire-maiden. You're sleeping on your side, damn it! Turn over. That's no way to sleep with the fire-maiden. Well, then, go ahead. Sleep on your side and stare with one eye!"

Olds poured brandy on the figure and flames began to envelop it. He picked up a Napoleonic hat that had dropped from his own lion-like head and recovered his bull-whip. In trying to crack it, he fell into an arm chair and closed his eyes. His massive chest heaved like a bellows and his great hands twitched as he held fast to the handle of the whip.

"Don't touch him," Enid said, as Terry went towards

her father. "You think we're crazy. Well, we are. But he's won his battle."

"I feel goofy," Terry said. "It's got me stopped dead."

They sat silently for a long time. Terry kept looking at the burning saint. Enid was staring at her hands. Finally she said: "It astounded you to see this. You don't understand any part of it. I wouldn't even try to explain it. I don't have to. But something happened to you, too. What was it, Terry?"

"You got me. I don't know. It was all so crazy."

"Why did you throw that bottle?"

He spoke brokenly. "I guess I got to tell you."

"You don't have to. It doesn't matter."

He rose. "Yes, I do have to tell you or I'll go nuts. But you got to keep shut up about it. You got to keep it secret."

"Never mind. Let's have a drink."

"I couldn't stand it no longer, that statue. It give me the creeps. When I first come in, I saw it and it made me want to back out and lam for my hotel. They say I'm game. I dunno. Nobody ever hurts me much in the ring. I like to get hit. Yes, I do. I like to feel blood spill down my chest. It cools me off. But there's something about living that I can't even guess at. It has me tied in a knot. When I seen that statue looking with one eye, it meant... well, it meant something. Bad luck, maybe."

"Oh, don't be so damned ignorant! Are you drunk, too?"

"Yeah, I'm ignorant. You're right, I'm ignorant. And

pretty soon I won't be only ignorant." He hissed the rest: "I'll be blind."

She didn't speak, but looked at him narrowly. He went on: "It's a secret, see? It was that accident that done it. It pushed in my nose and that don't matter. But since then, I can't see out of my right eye." He laughed mockingly. "A lot of fun to fight with one wick turned down. And pretty soon the other will be going. Jesus! I thought that statue was looking at me when I come in. Yeah. And I thought it nodded to me. Then, while the whip was cracking, by God! ... Yeah. I'm goofy, you think ... well, it spoke to me. By God! It did speak, but I wouldn't give it a tumble. I threw the bottle to shut it up. I wanted to go. See? I wanted to go, but I couldn't. I couldn't because I'm nuts about you.... Now tell me to get the hell out! I don't care. I'll go. And when I'm peddling lead pencils on the street, I'll be blind, but seeing you as plain as day. ... Yeah! I'm ignorant or I wouldn't be telling a swell dame like you I loved her...."

The door opened and Adam Brook walked in. His eyes bulged and his face grew haggard and pale. He stood stock-still at the doorway, then took two or three short steps into the room, resting his hands on an overstuffed chair and staring at the scene.

Chapter Eight

THE Little Napoleon stood still only a few moments beside the overstuffed chair. Enid was looking at him as though he were a Lazarus coming from the tomb. Olds was floundering back to a semi-conscious state and Terry regarded the husband, the wife and the father-in-law with baffled curiosity.

Mr. Brook's catalepsis was broken when the bull-whip fell from the hand of Enid's father. Hardly had the lead-ballasted handle struck the floor when Brook began to rage and scream. The paleness of his face was gone. Blood rushed to his cheeks and jowls and brow until his countenance was as purpled as that of a child born after all-night travail. Indeed, it seemed he was some sort of monstrous infant new-born—and it was as though Dr. God was holding him by the heels over the birth-bed, giving him a smart slap on the breech to bring him breath wherewith to cry.

"Get out! Get out!" he screamed, thrashing the air with his arms. "Get out! All of you. I'll not let you make a brothel of my home. I won't stand it! I won't!" He

began pointing to each of the three objects of his wrath. "Go! You and you and you!"

Enid rose numbly, her eyes downcast. Terry was on his feet, his legs apart as though he expected an attack, and his mouth partly open with bewilderment. Olds was leaning forward in his chair, struggling as though his great hips were being pressed in a vise. Brook was giving inarticulate cries that lifted his voice to falsetto pitch.

"Vandals!"

He leaped at Olds and snatched a Napoleonic hat from the drunken head. "Sacrilege!" He then ran about the room, finding another hat on the floor, where it had fallen from the statue, and taking still another hat from a table where it lay in a pool of wine. "My good God! Hats worn by The Emperor himself! What infamy!"

Enid finally spoke. "It's my fault, Adam. Wait until the others..."

"Don't say a word!" Brook thundered, holding the three hats to his bosom as though to shield them from their impious gaze. "You leave or I'll leave. I've seen enough."

Enid broke in: "You haven't seen anything at all. We had a simple party for my father..."

"Your father! That drunken sot! That faking, miserable sot! Damn him! Damn him!"

Mr. Olds stood up, swaying and pop-eyed. "Becker! Listen to this, Becker. From the *Odyssey*: 'Oft have I seen with solemn funeral games, Heroes and Kings committed to the flames. But strength of youth, or valor of'..."

Mr. Olds sobered slightly as he focused upon his son-

in-law. He bellowed: "You were burned up! You were not burned up! Salamander! Nice little salamander. Kiss me, salamander."

Brook stamped his foot. "Swine! Swine, all of you!"

"Hey, there," Becker said. "Just a minute!"

"Get out of here, you gangster," Brook said. "Get out, or I'll call an officer."

Terry looked at Enid wonderingly, as though to ask her if she wanted protection. She shrugged and then signaled him to go. Becker drew a deep breath. "O.K., Governor," he said, walking out of the room and not looking back.

Brook was gibbering and striding about the room, looking at the wreckage and gnashing his teeth. Suddenly he saw the now-charred figure on the coals. At first he did not know exactly what it was, although he seemed to sense it was not a great log. He was unable to speak coherently. He waved to Enid and she understood him to mean that he was ill. He sank in a fireside chair and actually gagged as does a seasick person.

"I'm sorry for this," she began.

He pointed to the swaying, lumbering Olds, who was trying to chin himself on the mantel-shelf. "Get him... Godchaux... Servants... out of sight... Quick..."

Enid did not call Godchaux. She prevailed on Mr. Olds to go with her to his room. Brook did not watch them as they left the scene of their celebration. Dimly he heard the thick-tongued man say: "The mountains look on Marathon.'..."

Adam sat staring into the fire. Finally he realized what

the burning object was. He gazed as though fascinated and watched the glass eye that grew red, then white, as flames licked the head. He sat as one in a trance. The eye melted and fell in lazy tears down the black cheek of the burned saint.

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PART FIVE

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Chapter One

*B*ROOK spent two weeks in St. Louis beside the death-bed of his synthetic mother. He had left New York contrary to the advice of Judge Webb. In consequence, he lost an important legal skirmish in the Government's suit against Brook Utilities, Inc. Millions of dollars were involved in the action which sought to restore to the Government's Indian wards irregularly-leased oil lands in Oklahoma.

As he sat beside his dying "mother," Brook fancied her illness had been brought about by his own domestic troubles. He told her not to be unhappy over his predicament. She looked at him vacantly and talked in French, which he pretended to understand but did not. When he told the Madame how wantonly his wife had behaved, she roused and said in English:

"The Princess gave me a blue ribbon at a fête."

Then she died and Adam ordered a huge granite mausoleum to be built for her on a hill facing the east. A secretary went through the Madame's effects and showed Adam a sheaf of yellowed letters.

"Translate them when we get aboard the car," Adam directed.

At the station and while flashlight photographs were taken of The Little Napoleon, he gave an interview in which he said that "the hope of this world lies with the mothers."

When Adam reached Chicago in his private railway car and newspapers were brought in, he read the St. Louis interview with great satisfaction. Judging from the space devoted to it, the death of Brook's mother was an international calamity. He also was recipient of a mountain of condolences telegraphed and cabled from many cities. His secretary read the choice ones to A.B. He nodded approval when he learned that flags were half-staffed on his many buildings and that work was being suspended for an entire minute at high noon in every *Brookol* establishment, from refinery to filling station.

He interrupted the reading to instruct his secretary: "Be sure to have them stop drilling in the Oklahoma fields, also. And make it two minutes instead of one."

"I have the translations ready, Mr. Brook. Should I bring them to you now?"

"Yes, I'll look them over. Poor mother. It is an irreparable loss. Well, it will bring me comfort to read the letters that she treasured. I shall have them bound in the finest leathers. I know a Florentine. I shall have a miniature inlay of her on each binding. And each miniature shall depict one of the rôles that she made famous.... Yes, bring me the letters that her own sweet hands once fondled."

The secretary went for the letters. The steward announced that breakfast was ready, but Brook said he would wait until he had read one or two of the letters that had been translated.

"I'll keep your cereal warm," the steward said.

Brook settled back in a wicker chair after his secretary had left him alone with the translations. The first missive was signed "Auguste." His eye fell on a paragraph that seemed to leap out of the typed page. For a moment he believed his secretary had played a terrible joke. He read more closely as follows:

"My dear Yvonne:

"Again I write to ask that you cease complaining; that you cease annoying me with your insistence that we resume what was for me a very charming interlude, but only an interlude. It has to be, Yvonne. There is no alternative. You are still young. You will forget.

"Please do not write or call at my studio again. Young as you are, you must realize that I have my art and that it must be served regardless of the urges of my physical being. We had one glorious week of love. Is that not enough? When you are older, you will realize that one week of such ecstasy is given but few women. I am deeply sorry if this offends you, but I must be as frank in matters of this sort as I am when I put chisel to stone or when I work with my hands in clay. You ask me if I shall be sorry when I learn that you have taken other lovers. I reply that such a course is to be decided upon only by you. Yes, I hope you find love. You are pretty. You have a great career before you—but not with me. It is impossible,

Yvonne. It is ended, just as the flight of a gay-plumaged pair of birds ends, and tomorrow brings another flight by other birds. Please understand . . ."

He threw the page to the floor and was about to grind it beneath his feet. Who was *Auguste*? He fought heroically to master himself and to compose his features. He rang for his secretary.

"Is your knowledge of French infallible?" he asked.

"I went to school in Paris, A.B."

"What was the sculptor Romain's first name? Don't guess!"

The secretary had a premonition of tragedy. "His name was . . . Really, A.B., I'd better look it up in the dictionary."

Brook spoke as though he begrudged Romain this recognition. "Do you mean to say *his* name is in the dictionary?"

"It should be in the biographical appendix."

"Look it up."

While the secretary was thus engaged, Brook picked up another, earlier letter and read:

"You were the flame. I the moth. You said you worshipped my art. I, in turn, worshipped the genius of your amazing love. I felt that my soul was pouring from me. Need anyone ask why I did not go to my workshop? What was marble to me after I had clasped the flesh of you, my lover! It was as a sacrament, our stolen moments. Was it really theft? In the eyes of God we were married. Body and soul, we were one. And then, during that mad separation, I worked as though

possessed. And I believe the world now will see my masterpiece. I kiss the marble bosom, shutting my eyes and telling myself it is your bosom. Yvonne! Yvonne! I am mad with waiting...."

The secretary returned. "Romain's first name was 'Auguste.'"

Brook hid his clenched hands. "Take a telegram."

He dictated cancellation of an order for the great granite mausoleum. The remains of Madame Yvonne Elise of the French Theater must be cremated and the ashes scattered.

"Shall I serve breakfast now?" the steward came in to ask.

"I am too busy for breakfast, Carter," Brook said. "Open this window."

Brook asked his secretary for the originals of the letters. When he had them in hand and was alone, he began tearing them to bits, throwing the fragments from the window in the manner of the Chinese when tossing devil-puzzles from a moving hearse.

Chapter Two

ON his return, Adam put up at his club, where he received reports of detectives. An operative of the *Argus Agency* submitted proofs that a pugilist, Terence Becker, had been using the Brook estate at Westbury for training and that the exclusive neighbors were highly annoyed. Furthermore, Mrs. Brook herself, mounted on her horse, actually had been seen as she accompanied the fighter on the road, *pacing him* as he jogged over frozen highways. The proof stopped there, but the operative inferred hideous relationships.

The press now was full of ballyhoo for the charity bouts, which were scheduled to occur three days after Brook's return from St. Louis. The newspapers pictured Enid and her society friends selling tickets and otherwise performing in behalf of the affair. Brook grew hollow-eyed and desperate.

He neglected his business, against urgent pleas of Judge Webb and Ellen Gage. He informed them that his mother's death had undone him; that he was unable to get his mind on such mundane things as oil leases and the wobbly Market.

On a January Saturday Brook decided to talk to his wife, no matter how busied she was with the Fund. When he reached the pent-house, he was cold and dispirited. Enid was not in, so he sat beside the great fireplace to wait. He sat there a long time, recalling how the wooden saint had been burned and how his own heart had been consumed with doubt and with dread. He got up and went to the west windows and watched the sun dip behind the highlands of New Jersey. Then he went to the French doors that opened on the miniature garden he had made so high above the town, and in which he had planted special seeds with his own hands in rich loam brought from the valley of the Nile. For a moment he was heartened by the thought that the sod of his little lawns soon again would be caressed by spring. Then once more he could let his hands knead the moist, warm earth of the flower boxes. Wooden shields would be taken from shrubs that bordered parapets and gravel paths. Grapevines and honeysuckles would cover the tea-house that occupied one corner of the roof. Tulip bulbs would swell again in the narrow cornice-beds. Adam dreamed of the huge red and yellow chalices of the Holland tulips that always brightened his springtime, so far above the surly, metallic breathing of the metropolis.

He went back to his fire-place chair to dream of himself as a child of Earth. His dream was shattered by the bellowing voice of Courtney J. Olds, reverberating from somewhere in the house. The brazen fellow was singing an evangelical hymn: "The Brewer's Big Horses Can't Run Over Me!"

There were telephone calls from the office, but Brook

told the butler he was not in to anyone except Mrs. Brook. He tried to recapture his dream but it was no use. Why did he feel so empty of life? Perhaps he had aimed too high. His roof-garden seemed symbolic. Perhaps that, too, was destined to be defeated because it was detached from the world through height. Possibly a man should cling to earth, staying near the ground. How long ago it seemed since he had walked with bare feet in the furrows! What was growing on Farmer Braden's grave? Nothing now was growing on the prairie, for it was winter, raw and marrow-chilling. There would be a blanket of snow on that grave and on the other graves where bleak monuments thrust through the deep, cold blanket; frosty columns of stone, making the cemetery look like a forgotten birthday cake for a very old man, the candles unlighted and the guests not come.

But spring would return, bringing the bees from their winter hives. First there would be a few weather-scouts crawling about on the landing-board when the sun broke through. But now the bees would be clustered warmly in their frames, dreaming of spring that was to bring nectar to the white clover and basswood.

Enid came in and said "Hello," casually, as though Adam had not been away from home for long. He found himself marveling at her self-assurance, her matter-of-factness. He would be calm, too, outwardly. Even if his heart were being chewed to fine bits.

"The advance sale for the Fund is over \$80,000," she said.

"Is that unusual?"

"They say it is—for an indoor bout."

"Will your man win?"

"What do you mean, *my* man?"

"Well... You're interested in Becker winning, aren't you?"

"Not in the least." She threw off her chinchilla wrap. "It's hot in here, don't you think?"

"I felt cold. Shall I open the doors?"

"Never mind. I've been on the go all day. Well, we haven't had a chance to see each other for a long time, have we? How have you been, Adam?"

"Just so so. My mother's death upset me, of course."

"Yes. Naturally." She was studying him. "It seems funny for us to be sitting here, sparring."

"I didn't know I was sparring."

"I sort of get that feeling, though. Why don't we come right out and talk?"

"I thought we were talking."

"Isn't there something on your mind? You look as though there was."

"What's on your mind, Enid? The charity bouts?"

"Yes, that's on my mind, too. But there's something else."

"What, for instance?"

"I've been thinking things over."

"What things?"

"I'll try to tell you. We'll be very quiet and sincere, won't we? Just as if it was not ourselves, but two other persons who were being talked about?"

"What are you getting at?"

"It's not entirely clear in my mind yet, just what I want to say or how to say it. I'm not at all angry or worked up about it. In fact, it's a sort of droll comedy. Yet, I can't laugh it off and I can't cry, either."

"It seems to me you're doing the sparring now."

"I want you to give me a divorce. Is that sparring?"

"Oh, you want *me* to give *you* a divorce! How simple!" He put his hand in his waistcoat, Napoleon-fashion. "Good God! You're insulting my intelligence."

"I'm insulting my own by staying married to you. I want a divorce. New York, not French. I want it to be sure-fire—one that will stick. Don't get up and put on an act. We're going to talk this over calmly. Quit kidding yourself. Let's both quit kidding ourselves."

"I don't want to hear any more. If you want to live separately, we'll live separately. But we'll have no scandal. Certainly no divorce. Remember who I am."

"That's just why I want a divorce—I keep remembering who you are."

"You ask me to be calm." He looked at her grimly. "Then you do and say things to stir me up. You are terribly cruel and selfish. You and your whole tribe! I won't give you the satisfaction of seeing me blow up. If I did, I'd tell you plenty."

She rose. "Well, we don't speak the same language. It's no use." She went to the door. "Are you staying for dinner?"

He followed her as she went to her room. "Let's not quarrel, Enid. Can't we start over again?"

They were now in her bedroom. She sat down at her

dressing table and rang for her maid. "You'd better dress for dinner, Adam. We want to be fastidiously dressed so that we can bore each other in the most fastidious manner. Oh, get out of here!"

"Let's talk the whole thing out now, Enid. I'd like to show you where you're entirely wrong."

"We can't get together, Adam. Let's have our lawyers do it for us."

He was surprised. "Then you have taken it up with a lawyer?"

"I'm going to, after I am through with the Fund matter."

"Here, now. What grounds would you have for a divorce in New York State? You know that calls for misconduct, don't you?"

The maid had come in. Enid said: "I want to dress for dinner, Adam. I'll see you then."

"Will you have the maid leave for just a minute? Then I'll go."

Enid hesitated. Then she waved the maid out of the room. "It has suddenly dawned on me, Adam."

"What?"

"Sit down, won't you? You may have to sit down by the time I'm through."

"Please, Enid."

"Now, let's begin at the beginning. When you married me, I was what you might call a wild virgin. I raised all kinds of hell; let good looking boys kiss me, but I was a virgin just the same. I don't know why, but I was. Then I met you and thought you might do as a plugging, horri-

bly rich man who could give me everything that I wanted in the way of gowns, jewels and the rest. You did give me things. I think you really were as kind as you knew how to be. But I was unhappy. You know what happened the first night . . . you know what has happened ever since. . . .”

“You’re rather cruel, Enid.”

“I know I am. Life is cruel, and to hit back, I have to be cruel, too. I’ll skip over it. You know as well as I do that everything went wrong. After all, I’m young and I’m human. At first I thought it was my fault; that I was cold, or not normally-made or something. Your own doctor dispelled that, didn’t he?”

“Let’s not talk about it.”

“Why not? I’d tell you if you were God himself. When people are married, even if they don’t love each other a lot, they’re entitled to be physically married. Isn’t that so?”

“You always made me so nervous, Enid. That’s why it was. I was always afraid of failing.”

“Maybe so, and I’m sorry. But the fact is you failed. The fact is that I was married to you, but I wasn’t married. I wasn’t one of those anæsthetic women that psychologists write about. I wasn’t Case No. 750 or something. I was just a full-blooded girl that was being made frantic . . .”

“For God’s sake stop it!”

“Then give me a divorce.”

He got up and came to her. “Who advised you to do this?”

"Don't get excited. Nobody advised me. I've seen the light; that's all."

"I know who advised it. Your father did."

"You know everything, don't you?"

"Your father really is the cause of all our trouble."

"That's interesting. Did my father rob you of your manhood?"

"He reared you wrong to begin with. He's a blackguard, and he has tried to make a blackguard out of you."

"You'd better go dress for dinner, Adam. You didn't have anything to say to me after all."

"I've got a lot to say, and you'll listen."

"Not if it bores me, I won't."

"You'll listen. Your father is a madman. He has no sense of responsibility and he is a swindler."

"Are you going to get him indicted by the grand jury?"

"You and he are great jokers, aren't you? Well, it's not a joke, and you'll find that out soon enough!"

"What are you going to do? Order us to the Tower?"

"I could forgive your father a lot of things, putting them down to plain lack of character. But I can't swallow a lot of other things. He's a fake! He claims he is an artist. Well, he's not. Look at the picture he painted of me a month after we were married. It was a botch. Can you honestly say it looked like me?"

"Well, when Judge Webb saw it he said: 'The very image of Adam Brook.' But he might have been wrong."

"He's a fake and you know it. God knows I've stud-

ied the whole matter over. We could have been happy without him."

She shrugged. "You're beginning to bore me, Adam!"

"By the eternal! I've chartered a ship, and your father is leaving for Tahiti next week. He's stalled long enough. Then we'll work out our marriage without his damnable influence."

"Are you through?"

"I'm through with that part of it."

"You're right. My father is a madman. Anyone is who blurts out the truth. He's immoral, too, but that's more than you can say."

He broke in; "That's no kind of answer to make."

"I didn't know you asked a question."

"I didn't but I made charges that you can't deny."

"No? Well, who are you? I'll tell you. A crummy little bookkeeper trying to horn in on your superiors. Yes, you are! A mongrel trying to worry a lion. My father is a genius. Despite his eccentricities, his works hang in world-galleries. I don't see any of your oil-wells in the Luxembourg. He has five paintings there. It's a case of Life versus a bookkeeper; Nature against Civilization. You, the half-civilized bookkeeper, insist on trying to impress your pigmy stamp on me and my father, so you can raise your own standard by lowering ours. You have almost stifled the both of us. There's only one thing can whip me or my father and that is mediocrity. Your mediocrity has worn us down. I won't let you break his spirit."

Brook decided to be tenaciously calm. "You have to admit, though, that he is horribly immoral."

"He's physical, if that's what you mean. He loves love. But I don't think it is as immoral as a person who sees something dirty in every situation between man and woman. At least he doesn't bungle, arousing a woman and then retreating like a capon."

"Did you mean that shot for me?"

"Yes, except you never aroused me much."

"How cruel you can be!"

"It wasn't cruel of you to call my father a fake and a blackguard, I suppose?"

"Well, he is a fake. It's the truth."

"He's the sort of fake I love. You're a fake, but you're the sort I don't love."

"I'm a fake?"

"You are."

"What makes you say that?"

"You wouldn't want to hear. Let's quit talking. We're on a merry-go-round."

He startled her by sinking to his knees and clasping her legs. "Enid! Enid! Come back to me. Let's begin over again."

She looked down at him. "I feel rather sorry for you, Adam, but we're through. We were through when we started. You did the best you knew how, but you didn't know how. Maybe I am to blame. Anyway, we failed. I must have the divorce, Adam."

He clung to her legs. "Give me a chance, Enid."

"I'm all out of chances," she said. "Now get up and dress for dinner."

She reached down to push off his hands which were

gripping her, bruising her. He groaned: "Please, Enid. Can't we begin over again, a sort of trial marriage?"

"You might as well stop talking. I want that divorce. You can't carry water in a sieve."

He rose. "All right. I suppose it's no use. I'll give you a divorce."

"I could almost love you for saying that, Adam."

He hesitated. Then: "But first I must ask you something."

"Well, ask it."

"It's something that's been burning my heart out."

"Go ahead and say it."

He spoke slowly. "How far did you go with that prize-fighter?"

She thought a while and then said: "Must you ask that?"

"I've got to know."

"Wouldn't it be better to forget the whole thing?"

"Then there was something to it?"

"It's all past, Adam. Why bring it up?"

He was shaking. "I've got to know. You must tell me."

"Very well, then. We had an affair. A short one. A mad one."

He acted as though stunned. "Oh, my God!"

"Well, you insisted on knowing. I expect you to keep your word about the divorce. I'll not ask for any settlement. You've given me enough as it is."

He stood erect, his face purple. There was a murderous look in his black eyes. "You damned harlot! You'll get no divorce now!"

"Oh, a welsher, too! You'd go back on your word."

"You welshed yourself. You went back on your marriage vow. That makes it even. You'll get no divorce. I'll get one from *you*!"

She laughed mirthlessly. "You will, will you? Well, listen. I have a choice. I can sue for annulment, you damned ex-convict!"

Brook actually staggered and had to sit on the edge of the bed. "My God! Don't!"

"You brought it on yourself. You spied on me, so I spied on you. My lawyers have an affidavit from a retired warden of an Iowa reformatory. They tell me I can annul the marriage because you didn't disclose that before our wedding. But possibly you'd rather have me seek my annulment on physical grounds."

"Stop! For God's sake, stop!"

"Why stop? You called my father a faker. Who's the faker now? You and your damned mother in St. Louis! You and your being born in Boston! You and your drowned father, who was an artist." Again her terrible laughter. "We've both got undersea-painters for fathers, haven't we? Only yours stays down longer than mine."

He got up from the bed as though in a daze. Then he walked toward the door, hearing her actually hiss him; hearing her cry out that he was sterile; hearing that and many other things that his brain couldn't register. He heard her say she was going to put it all in her allegations asking for an annulment. He turned at the door:

"You win. I'll give you the divorce. But you'll promise not to say a word about this..."

"This faking?" she supplied.

"It's blackmail," he mumbled. "But I'm going to give you more than a divorce." He went away, almost sobbing. "I'll give you more than a divorce. You'll see."

As she closed and latched her door, she thought she heard him say: "Waterloo!"

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Chapter Three

!E had sat often in this great office, picturing himself as the long-awaited emperor of industry. It was hard for him on this leaden Sunday to believe that Waterloo had befallen him the night before. He sat in the throne-like chair which made him seem as small as a ventriloquist's dummy. He tried to blot out the whole picture of his married life. He tried to think back to the many winning battles of his career.

"That was Marengo," he said to himself, as he thought of his skill in foreseeing post-war depression. He actually smiled through his pain as he remembered how he had invested in coal immediately after the war and then had withdrawn when coal began to toboggan. He had entered the world of rails at their lows and had been so securely buttoned up when depression came that he was able to shop for bargains on the Street and make long-established traders pay through the nose.

Then his smile faded. What was a Marengo or an Austerlitz in business, when one had to face Waterloo in love? And what would St. Helena be like? All alone. Exiled from her. He hated her. He loved her. He despised

her. He wanted her. The loose-pulleys began to rasp in his skull. He felt called on to make a supreme gesture. What would it be? He had said to her that he would "give more than a divorce." What had he meant? His lips had said it. His brain had not known what the lips had said. He took a pencil and drew the profile of a human head on a memorandum sheet. "They call me 'A.B.,'" he mumbled. Then he drew a line across the human head, dividing the skull from the face part of the picture. "I am 'A.B.,'" he said. Then he labeled the skull-portion of his drawing with the letter "A" and the face-portion, near the lips, with the initial "B." Then he laughed hysterically: "'A.' plus 'B.' equals 'A.B.' But 'A.' does not know what 'B.' is doing!"

Then he went to his overcoat pocket and brought out a small package. He opened the package. In it were capsules containing white crystals. Then he retired to his Napoleonic retreat and selected a small glass from his relics. The Emperor himself had sipped from this glass. He filled it half full of water and dropped a capsule into it. It soon began to cloud up in a whitish solution. He studied it grimly, saying: "'A' does not know what 'B' is doing."

He stood there looking first at the glass and then at a copy of the Baron Gros painting, showing Napoleon astride a white horse at Eylau. The smoke of sacked villages rose in the background. Brook went to his desk, set down the glass of poison on the teakwood top and toyed for a while with the iron apple paperweight.

"Paris had a gold apple. Mine was only iron."

His eyes were on the plaster death mask. What would Napoleon have done in this situation? He, too, had been tempted once to take a vial of poison. But he hadn't taken it. Brook wouldn't take poison, either. It was then that Adam Brook cut short his gesture of death. He departed from his offices, wishing he had not left that suicidal note at *Brook Towers*. Enid would laugh at him again. Quite likely she would hiss again.

He proceeded to Judge Webb's apartments and had a long, earnest talk. The head of the *Argus Agency* joined the conference and agreed to supply a professional correspondent for the divorce evidence.

Brook urged that a respectable sort of girl be sent him for the technical compromise. "It's immoral enough to go through this scene without having to be with the wrong sort of woman."

The Agency head sighed. "I can't guarantee the morals of our girls, Mr. Brook. We don't want a novice. It's too delicate a situation and my license would be revoked in an instant if there was a slip-up."

Brook rose. "You tend to the details, Judge. I'll be at my club if anything comes up."

"Better register a bit early at the hotel, Mr. Brook," the Agency head said. "I'll have the girl there at seven in the evening."

Chapter Four

ADAM BROOK waited in the hotel bedroom to be compromised by a woman he never had seen.

He had registered "Adam Brook and wife" an hour ago. A smugly impersonal clerk, who was stanced like a robin prospecting for worms, scanned the aggressively bold script—Adam Brook and *wife*. The clerk lifted the registration card with the suave precision of a dealer in faro-bank. He cleared his throat with an insinuating purr and assigned Mr. Brook a suite on the twentieth floor. The clerk then turned to an assistant and said:

"You don't know what you're talking about. Becker will win in a walk tonight."

"He's an in-and-outer," the assistant said.

"The Gunner won't lay a glove on him."

In accord with a schedule prepared by the *Argus Agency*, the twin beds in Room 2034-A were dismantled. Porters moved the pieces from the room and substituted a double bed while Mr. Brook looked on. The men worked knowingly, like scene shifters. A housekeeper with a blimp-like bosom inspected the arena of compromise with expert eyes and went out. A plumber rose from his knees after

repacking a radiator steam-valve with graphite cord. The heat was turned on and the pipes clucked like a hundred setting hens. Adam Brook was left alone. He took off his ulster, put it in a closet and then stood before the mirror of the closet door and fingered the Legion of Honor ribbon in his lapel.

He shivered as he thought of the scandal that impended. Right now he could envision newspaper men squatting at their typewriters in metropolitan city rooms, beating their keys until dust rose about them like clouds of pollen from pine trees. How avidly they would write of the Decline and Fall of the Brook Moral Empire! He could see the lewd, staring type that would relate how Brook, the coal and oil baron; Brook, the metropolitan business builder and civic benefactor; Brook, farm relief adviser to the White House—how Brook, The Little Napoleon of Pine Street, had been discovered in a hotel while flouting the Seventh Commandment of God (via Moses at Mt. Sinai).

He had held an industrial empire in his hand, but he had been unable to hold white-skinned beauty in his arms. There were architects who could build huge edifices of steel and stone, mocking the gigantic labors of the Pharaohs. But where was one who could construct a doll-house that would please the doll?

The radiators chortled and it seemed that even the mechanistic world was laughing at him. And soon the world of man would laugh—how he dreaded the day. Did it pay to be clean? Should a man not rush madly into the lecheries of the world and have his fill? What sort

of girl would the *Argus Agency* send? His black eyes glittered with pain and memory.

He looked out of the window and far down on the snow-quilts that mantled Central Park. At another time, perhaps, he would have stood there, one hand hidden to the wrist in his waistcoat, estimating the acres of park land in terms of building sites. Today he saw only snow and patches of ice on which skaters no larger than brownies flitted.

There was a gentle but insistent tinkling to be heard—if one listened attentively. The subdued tinkling came from the waistcoat of Adam Brook. He frowned as he drew his chime-watch from his pocket and confirmed that it was seven o'clock. The woman who was to compromise him was due. She would turn out to be a despicable whore, of course. Persons not prompt with appointments could be no good at all.

A floor maid came in flat-footedly, carrying a sheaf of towels over a thick arm. The redness of her knuckles caught Brook's eye. The red knuckles testified to hard work, the essence of Apostle Brook's doctrine of industrial philosophy. He put away his watch and felt for a dollar-bill. He handed the bill to the maid as an incentive for her to keep on working.

The maid moved toward the bathroom. "I brung you some more linen when I heard your wife was comin'."

He was annoyed and wished he hadn't tipped the old loon. He turned to the window again, looking down at the avenue where traffic lights were blinking red and

green, as though murder and jealousy were flirting with each other.

The maid came out of the bathroom. She stood and rubbed her big hips. She scruffed her palms up and around as though she were currying the rump of a draft horse.

"The last couple that stayed in this room was newlyweds," she said.

"Go on out. Mrs. Brook and I are not newlyweds."

The maid retreated. "But you was onct."

He glared at her and saw the apron strings that made a white X on the broad back. It made him think of "X," the unknown quantity in algebra. He thought of women as the unknown quantity, wondering if he ever would know what the "X" in women was.

The maid had not shut the door behind her and Brook was startled from his abstraction when someone spoke. He turned from the window and saw a jaunty young woman in a gray squirrel coat and close-fitting gray felt hat. She was a cheerful young woman, not more than twenty-two or twenty-three.

"I'm Miss Evans from the Agency," she said.

"You're late, Miss Evans."

"I'm so sorry. I just got through with another case."

He lifted his brows. "Do you have more than one case in a day?"

"One day I had four. It was a record."

Brook caught the smell of perfume. The perfume was agreeable. Brook was not. "I don't like to have people late with me."

"I'm very, very sorry."

Miss Evans had widely-set hazel eyes, very frank and winning eyes that were fringed by long, black lashes. Brook trembled a little as he realized he was alone with this young creature and that he probably could . . . He watched her as she moved to the clothes closet. There was a light in the closet that operated automatically when the door was opened. In the amber light Brook watched the girl slip off her coat and arrange it on a hanger. She took her time about it. She stroked the fur as though caressing a pet. As she removed her hat, her black hair was revealed. It was raven black. Her hair was waved softly and was long enough to be knotted at the back. The black hair and the full, red lips made the girl's face seem extraordinarily white, transparently blue-white, like skimmed milk. . . . Brook half-wished the agency had sent an older, less disturbing woman to compromise him. Why, she must be sixteen years younger than he! He had been taking care of bees in a reform school the day she was born. He had been selling bayonets to Russia and anchors to England when she was playing with dolls. How did a pretty girl get into such a despicable business? Had the "other case" of the afternoon resulted in carnal license? Perhaps he should try to save her.

Brook's eye wandered to the bed on which Miss Evans had flung some tabloid newspapers and a black week-end case. He speculated as to its contents. She came out of the closet, tugging delicately at her plain gray satin dress to make it fit more snugly. She sat down to remove her galoshes. He saw well-formed legs as she unzipped her storm-shoes. She wore taupe-colored hose and when the

galoshes came off he saw reptile-skin pumps. She took her bag and went to a dressing table.

Her movements were simple and professional. She went about this business with the air of a trained nurse. Had she produced a clinical thermometer and thrust it in Brook's mouth, he would not have been entirely amazed. While she was using her lipstick, he saw a peach-colored bit of silk protruding from the bag.

"Miss Evans," he said hesitantly.

"Yes?"

"I'd like you to know that nothing is expected of you tonight except a technical compromise."

"Then I'll not put on my lingerie until time for the detectives."

"May I order dinner for you?"

"Thanks. Not now. My last case blew me to a swell feed."

Brook had a fleeting pang of jealousy. "What sort of man was he?"

"Very nice."

"Was he young?"

"No. He was about thirty-five."

"That's not old, is it?"

"Well, it ain't exactly young. Anyway he had gray hair. I guess his wife gave him the gray hair."

Brook ordered something to eat and Miss Evans read the tabloids while he had dinner. He kept looking at her, wondering how bad she really was. He tried to interest her in various subjects, but their conversation was limited. When he told her that business was a romantic thing and

that business men sometimes were poets and dreamers, she said she guessed he was right. "I like sporting men best, though," she added. "They throw their dough around so free."

"Do your people approve of your work?" he asked.

"I haven't any people."

"An orphan?"

"No."

"Then you must have some relatives."

"No. At least I don't admit it. Do you mind if I use the 'phone?"

"Go ahead."

"I had a date to go to the fight and now I have to break it. The agency was going to send another girl on this case, but the guy she was with yesterday beat her up."

"Do such things happen?"

"It never happened to me."

"Was the man arrested?"

"No. That would mean publicity. He squared it by giving the agency an extra fee. The agency, you see, splits with us girls."

"Are there many of you?"

"Not now. Business is dull on account of the stock market."

"How do you mean?"

"Lots of fellows can't afford these kind of divorces, so they're sticking it out with their wives a while longer. I was called on your case while I was on the other one. That's why I was a little late getting here." She lifted the telephone receiver. "I'll call my friend, if you don't mind."

Her friend was not in. She left word that she couldn't go to the fight. "And say, Gracie, tell him he can pick me up later. Just a minute." She put her hand over the transmitter and asked Brook: "You won't want me to stay all night, will you?"

"Of course not."

She continued over the telephone. "Suppose you and Mabel go to Lindy's and I'll be there about one in the morning. Maybe sooner. What's that? Yes, he's a nice old fellow. You bet. Quit your kidding. So long."

After she had hung up, Brook looked at her accusingly. "You meant me when you said 'nice old fellow,' didn't you?"

She colored. "I meant it as a compliment."

He sulked. She read her tabloids. A little after eight o'clock she asked: "Could we have a radio?"

"Pull out that night-table drawer. There's a radio and ear-phones in it."

"I know these hotel radios. They have two channels, but neither one's the right channel."

"What channel do you want?"

"I want WMSG."

"Which one is that?"

"Madison Square Garden. I want to listen-in on the fight. I got a personal interest in it."

"I don't think they'll permit a loud speaker here."

"You could swing it. They'd let you have one."

"Well, I'll see."

"Thank you so much, Daddy."

He frowned. "Please call me Mr. Brook, Miss Evans."

The electrician had a radio that he would lend Brook. He couldn't get up right away, but he'd bring it as soon as possible.

"The big bout is on at ten o'clock. I don't want to miss that." She smiled. "Terry Becker is a friend of mine."

Brook was taken aback by this news. "I hope you haven't been associating with *him*."

"We're pals. Did you see his picture in the papers tonight? I brought some papers with me."

"I don't want to see his picture."

"What's the matter? Did you bet on Gilbert?"

"I am surprised you have that kind of friends."

"I have lots of kinds. Gee, he's a honey! I hope he dumps Gilbert on his apple."

"How did you get acquainted with this prize fighter?"

"The Wild Cat?"

"Yes."

"The same way I got acquainted with you."

Brook wondered if a black nemesis were trailing him. "On a divorce case?"

"Sure. He took the run-out powder last year. Didn't you read about it?"

"Are you in love with him?"

"I was for a while. He's such a personality! And what he doesn't know about love..."

"Stop it!"

"Did I speak out of turn?"

"I hope Becker gets his head knocked off!"

"I guess you got a bet down on Gilbert at that."

"Yes, I've got a big bet on him."

"I wish I could pull for him, seeing how nice you've been to me. But I honestly can't. I hope nothing holds up that radio."

Brook sat on the bed, for a moment forgetting the girl. "The whole world's going straight to hell!"

"Go ahead and talk about your troubles," she said. "All my cases do. It kind of helps them get it out of their system. You're sure there ain't anything I could do for you?"

She rose and walked like a mannikin, her hips swaying and her bosom bulging saucily against gray satin that was stretched as tightly as skin. He turned his head. She said matter-of-factly: "I was told to do anything you said, Mr. Brook. Of course there's an extra charge of a hundred if I really let you make love to me."

He raised his hand. "There won't be anything like that. Is that clear?"

"I only was trying to help you," she said. "You acted funny and I thought you was trying to make me. I have so many funny propositions put to me that I didn't know..."

He blurted: "Well, now you know!"

The electrician, who said his name was Matty, came in with the radio. Miss Evans took a pair of manicure's scissors and laboriously clipped the weighing-in picture of Becker from a tabloid sports page. "What a build! Gee, he's swell!"

.

Chapter Five

THE electrician went downstairs to get fresh batteries. Brook was rather glad they were going to listen to the fight-broadcast, for it was just possible Becker might be whipped.

"How long have you known this prize fighter?"

She was looking critically at the picture of the stripped athlete, who was shown wearing a breech-clout improvised from a Turkish towel. "I never counted the time. A year or so, maybe. We had lots of fun and we went a whole lot of places."

"What kind of places?"

"Dance places mostly. *Roseland* and the night clubs. He's a dandy spender."

"I suppose he knocked down a lot of people to show off."

She laughed. "You don't know Terry. Naw, he never gets in trouble like that. He's full of fun. Why should he get in jams? Whenever he gets insulted on the street, he just kids his way out of it. He claims he won't fight unless he's paid for it. Yeah. Why should he go along the street, hitting people on their chin any more than you go along

passing out battleships, or whatever it was you said you made?"

"Are you going to hang that picture in your room?"

"You're not jealous? No, I'll send it to him. He never had a scrap book till I met him. I started collecting clippings for him. I still send him all I come across. Gee, look! Ain't he got some torso?"

"What is there about a fighter to love?"

"Lots of things. Everybody loves action. Maybe life is action. I don't know much about things, but it might be that the difference between life and death is action. When you move you are alive. When you quit moving you are dead. I love fights. It's a relief to see something go through to a finish. Life is so full of waits. But a fight? Gee, there is a finish to it in an hour or so. If there's a knockout, it's great. I get so tired of never seeing a finish. Just waiting."

"What are you waiting for?"

"I don't know. Do you?"

"No, I don't know. Nobody does. How long have you been in New York?"

"Two years. I tried for a job as show girl, but I went to live with a fellow. He was an awfully fine fellow. I never seen anyone kinder to his children than him."

"Children?"

"Sure. He had three. They came to see us every second month."

Matty came with the batteries. While he was connecting them, Miss Evans asked: "Who do you like in to-night's fight?"

"It ought to be close, Miss. Maybe Gilbert will win."

"Like hell he will!" Matty paused in his work as she added: "The Wild Cat will knock him flatter than a rug."

"I kind of lose interest in the fights," Matty said. "The decisions are so screwy it makes a guy chew holes in his hat."

Brook was sitting on the bed, turning the pages of the telephone directory. He was reading telephone book mottoes: "I want a policeman," "I want an ambulance," "I want to report a fire." Beneath these printed sentiments he came on a line of handwriting, scrawled in pencil by some Rabelaisian guest: "I want a woman."

Brook gingerly laid down two pounds of Manhattan and picked up one pound of God. Which is to say, he happened to take up a hotel Bible after ridding himself of the defiled telephone directory. He inspected the rectangle of white paper pasted inside the black cover of the Bible. On the rectangle were "Selections for Your Emergency."

"The Wild Cat knows too much for the Gunner," Miss Evans was telling Matty. "The Gunner's made to order for him. Becker will get on a merry-go-round, grab the brass ring and ride on."

Matty seemed sceptical. "I dunno, Miss. The Wild Cat don't train none. The only dumbbells he ever lifts is his cuff links. He can't last forever abusin' himself."

"You should have Terry's health!"

Brook was reading a selection entitled "When Lonely or Fearful (Matt. 6:19-34, Luke 15)." The electrician was pocketing his pliers. "It ought to work now, Miss. . . . They say the fight's goin' to be a longshoreman's special."

Brook was reading "Rewards of a Righteous Life." He heard dimly the response of a station, the babble of an announcer's voice and a rumbling sound which was the roar of the crowd. He shut the book on Matthew 5:1-12, beginning with: "And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain..."

The Announcer's voice: "You ought to be here, folks...biggest indoor crowd since the death of that great genius, George L. ("Tex") Rickard.... We're in for a real battle, sure enough, folks...grudge fight.... This is Dan Parker speaking.... Hear 'em yell.... The Mayor and his party have come in time for the main event.... Hello, Jimmy. Hello, Commissioner.... Joe Humphries, the veteran announcer, is... Just a minute, folks. Here comes one of the battlers galloping down the aisles now.... Who is it, Corum? ... It's the Gunner. It's Gunboat Gilbert, the Pride of Provincetown, and his handlers.... He waves at the crowd. He has on a bright blue dressing gown and a towel around his neck and head. There's a plaster on his nose.... What's that you said, Damon? Listen, folks. Damon Runyon says that plaster will..."

A dignified, crooning voice interrupts on the air. "This is Station WMSG, Madison Square Garden, New York. Broadcasting the Wild Cat Terry Becker-Gunboat Gilbert contest for the Light Heavyweight Championship of the World. This program, ladies and gentlemen, comes to you through the courtesy of The Challenge Soup Company of Clover, New Jersey. Challenge Soup challenges the world. Our slogan, 'Challenge Your Palate With Challenge Soup,' is printed on every can.... Challenge Soup...."

"To hell with the damned soup!" Miss Evans said.

Again the voice of the ringside announcer: "...and right while he was weighing in. Then Becker told him plenty. Here comes the Wild Cat. Wild Cat Terry Becker and his handlers, headed by the veteran Ernie Cripps. Howdy, Ernie. Listen to the fans. I didn't make that noise, folks. They wouldn't allow me to broadcast such a noise. It's the gang back of me. The raspberry. The Bronx Cheer. The Harlem Bird. The New Dorp Butterfly. The Times Square Trombone.... Dan Parker, broadcasting the Becker-Gilbert fifteen-round title bout at Madison Square Garden. ...The Wild Cat is standing on the ring-apron, that canvas-covered shelf outside the ropes. Standing there, sneering and mugging at the crowd. He has one hand on the top rope. He has the other hand raised to his face with his thumb at his nose. A lot he cares what the crowd thinks, says or does. Hear those jeers. You'd think he was a revenue officer. He vaults lightly over the ropes and dances around inside. He can't stay still. His hair is sleek and black, parted high on the left side. The men go to the center of the ring for instructions.... What's the argument about, Peglar? Here's a hot one. The Gunner objects to the Cat having vaseline on his hair. The Gunner says for the Cat to rub it off. The Cat puts down his head as though to butt the Gunner and says: 'Rub it off yourself, yellow belly!' Nice boy, the Wild Cat! They go to their corners to wait for the bell. Hey, Cripps! What was it the Cat asked the referee? Cripps says Terry asked the Referee which corner he should retire to after he knocks down the Gunner. What nerve! Trying to lick the Gunner men-

tally. There's another delay. The Gunner has protested and the Referee goes to the Cat and inspects his body to see if there is vaseline on his chest. The Cat looks in the pink of condition. There were rumors he was out of shape. He doesn't train a lot, you know. Plays handball with cocktail shakers against speakeasy mirrors and does roadwork on dance-hall floors. Once he saw ten minutes of daylight breaking over Long Island and claimed a sunstroke. This is a long delay, folks, and the seconds are in the ring again, arguing."

Miss Evans and Brook are sitting beside the loud-speaker. She says: "That's an old trick of Terry's. He causes all the delays he can to make the other fellow nervous."

"Not a very good sportsman," observes Mr. Brook.

The Announcer again: "They're still arguing. Great old Wild Cat, but incorrigible. Has fought over three hundred battles and most of 'em were gaited like Pier-A picnics. Has met 'em all. Never was a crutch-kicker. Likes to fight big fellows. Knocked out only once and that was when he was a kid just out of parochial school in Akron. Always dangerous. Fights like a windmill in a gale. Mauls, slashes, claws and slams with both mitts. Does everything exactly wrong. That's why he is so right. Well, it's going to begin at last. The men are in their corners flexing their legs by holding to the ropes and squatting. Can't get over the Cat's condition. The Cat is pounding his five-ounce gloves, back to back, breaking down the padding so that his knuckles will come closer to the surface. The Gunner is snorting through his nose like a bull. That's the way a fighter keeps his pipes clear. The Wild Cat doesn't snort

through his nose. He can't. He's a mouth-breather. His nasal passages were stopped when a steering wheel mashed in his awning seven months ago."

The bell rings at last.

From Announcer Parker: "Whoa there! Zippo! The Wild Cat comes out of his corner like the Century going through Peekskill. Slides out, glides out, low and racy and as swift as a mail plane. Half whirls about the flat-footed Gunner like Ty Cobb used to hook into second to beat the catcher's peg on a steal. Whammo! The Wild..." (The roaring of the crowd engulfs the voice of Mr. Parker) ... "his attack. This whirling dervish has all his old speed and more. He swarms over the Gunner, piling up points. That plaster on the Gunner's ant-eater is a mark for the Cat. A grazing left catches it and sends it spinning like a little kite without a tail. The pace is furiously fast. Gilbert scores straight lefts to the head, but they are high. There is action at close quarters, the Cat having the better of the exchanges. They clinch and are pried apart. The Cat shakes the Gunner with a hard left hook to the jaw and follows with a series of jabs. They mix again in close. The Gunner shoots a left but misses. The Cat counters with a right to the ribs. The crowd is daffy. The high pressure of battle sends the battlers from one corner to another.... Oh! Oh! Referee McPartland warns Becker against holding and hitting with one arm free.... One-two. The Wild Cat gives the Gunner a vicious one-two. The Gunner is shedding light wines and beers from the place where the plaster was. They clinch. The Gunner looks at the Referee. McPartland warns the Cat against using his head for a pile driver....

The Gunner misses an uppercut as they are broken. Lucky he did. It was loaded with fire-crackers. It's all the Cat's fight so far. He rocks Gilbert to his bunions with a raking left that snaps like a one-inch plank. The Gunner's timing is bad and he's being outgeneraled." (Another drowning roar from the crowd.) "The Cat landed on the Gunner's button. A short left hook that clicked like a subway turnstile. Just after a clinch, the Gunner whips over a lashing right. It lands on the Cat's left kidney with the noise of a lath on a hot water bottle. Not a fatal punch, but it leaves a red blotch like a gypsy's handkerchief." The bell breaks in with repeated beats.

From Miss Evans: "He's kicking the hell out of the Gunner!"

From Brook: "That Parker fellow sounds prejudiced."

From Announcer Parker: "The Wild Cat is himself tonight, and no mistake. But Gilbert is tough and dangerous." (A whistle blows.) "Ten seconds for the handlers to get out of the ring." (The bell rings.) "Round two, folks. The Gunner is spun completely around by a round-house left. The Wild Cat is high on his toes now, dancing, dancing. The Gunner snorts. Sprays of blood fall like rain on the Cat's chest. The men close in, clinch and wrestle, almost bowling over McPartland as he breaks them. Blood is smeared on the gray uniform of the referee and his hands are as bloody as those of Cain. A great workman, McPartland, and a handy man with his fives when he was a boxer. The Wild Cat's eyes are snaky and glittering. He sends blow after blow into the face of the Gunner. He seems to be trying to cut the Gunner to ribbons, rather

than polish him off, just like Kid McCoy slashed the face of Tommy Ryan at Maspeth, L. I., so long ago. This is a grudge fight, too, and all because the Gunner told the Wild Cat this afternoon that he was a drunken bum...."

From Miss Evans: "Kill the big tramp, Terry! Knock him dead!"

From Announcer Parker: "The Wild Cat is swarming over the Gunner like a monkey with a brush and a bucket of red paint. It's a murder! As the Cat rushes the Gunner, the Provincetown bruiser gets into a shell, framing his face with his forearms to shed off hooks and crosses. The Cat brings the Gunner out of his protective crouch with an unorthodox right-hand uppercut and the Gunner breaks ground. He is holding his forearms either side of his head, putting his face in parentheses....Look out! Holy herring!"

A deafening roar from the crowd, wildly sustained and tumultuous. The Announcer's voice is completely submerged for some seconds.

From Brook: "What's happened?"

From Miss Evans: "God! how do I know? The Cat's probably scored a knockdown, but I don't hear the time-keeper's hammer."

From Mr. Parker: "What a wallop! The Gunner came out of his shell and clipped the Cat over the left eye. A smashing right. Put all he had in one desperate bid. It made the Cat reel. He's hurt. No doubt of that. But he is snarling and coming in. A few inches lower and he would have been spilled. It snapped his head back and his eye is

bleeding. It's going to close, sure. Wow! Another! And another! The Gunner follows up his advantage."

Again the enveloping clamor of the throng. The bell.

From the air: "The Cat is wobbling as he starts for his corner. Look! He's going to the wrong corner! His seconds come out and grab him, steering him to his stool. He's snarling at Ernie Cripps. What's that, Skene? Don Skene says... Are you sure, Don? Yes, he says he's sure that the first blow by the Gunner jammed Becker's eye, turning his eyelid and folding the lashes inside and against the eyeball. That's mighty bad. They're getting the eyelid unwrapped now. They're rubbing a cut over the eye, using a cottonswab on a toothpick. The swab is dipped in adrenalin to stop the bleeding. They used to use collodion..."

From Miss Evans a sob: "Oh, God! What a break!"

From Mr. Brook: "What do you mean?"

From Miss Evans: "It's his good eye. And now it's bad, too."

From Mr. Brook: "What's that you're saying?"

From Miss Evans: "It's his good eye. And now the left is hit. What a break! He's game, though. He'll win."

From Announcer Parker: "The third round coming up. The Gunner's seconds apparently have sent him in to score first. He's a bit uncertain. He's not quick-witted like the Cat. He's taken a pretty bad shellacking, up to his lucky punch. The Cat is blinking. He has difficulty in locating the Gunner. The Gunner finally makes up his mind. He let's go a ripping left-hand drive for the head, but is short. The Wild Cat growls. He shakes his head, tossing it to

clear it. He comes in close and clinches to gain a few seconds of time. The crowd boos him. A hook catches the Cat in the mouth." (A roar of approval from the fans.) "The Wild Cat, stung into a fury, gets untracked and tears in like a tornado. Fists flying so fast you can't count them. But he is missing. The Gunner is winded and hangs to Terry like Joseph did to his brethren. They wrestle to the ropes and are broken. That left eye of the Cat's is puffy. Only a slit there. The visit to the ropes has resulted in a burn on the Gunner's broad back where the top rope has bitten into the skin. The Cat is clubbing and pawing. He seems tireless. He steers himself into a straight left jab. What a fight! The Gunner rallies again. There is a revolving storm of gloves, bodies, feet, arms and legs. Rosin dust rises in little clouds from the canvas. The gloves of both battlers are soaked with water and with blood. The Gas House District never saw a mill like this. Again Terry is cautioned for butting. The Gunner gets in a left-hand rip to the liver. Another clinch. Terry scores to the heart. A right-hander. The Gunner must have been butted plenty. There's a beautiful shiner and an egg coming out on his left brow. The Cat shifts.... The old Stanley Ketchel shift.... I'm wrong.... Bill McGeehan prompts me that it really is the Bob Fitzsimmons shift. He ought to know.... He's seen every fight since the Trojan War. The Gunner scores two times.... Wow! Becker... What? Yes, I know. ...I know it was a right hand. Becker half... As the bell rings, the Gunner shoots over a murderous..."

From the loud-speaker: "Crackle! Splutt! Splutt! G-r-r-r-r-r!"

Quiet.

Miss Evans whirls on Brook as though he is to blame for the fading out of the broadcast. "Do something! Don't sit there. It's gone dead!"

Brook goes to the telephone and gets the engine room: "Send Matty, the electrician, to Number 2034-A in a hurry."

As Brook is calling the radio comes to life, brokenly and with death-rattle phrases. "Challenge Soup...your palate...Splutt! Splutt!...Becker is..."

And again a dead nothingness, like last year's newspaper beneath this year's snow.

Chapter Six

BROOK was as anxious to hear news of the battle as was the girl. The electrician telephoned that he would be delayed on account of a refrigeration-motor bogging down. Miss Evans suggested that Brook telephone the sports departments of newspapers, which he did. He was told that the fight still was in progress; that was all.

Miss Evans took *Challenge Soup* for a ride. "The soup's what queered the bulbs. Right when a guy is fighting the battle of his career, some crooning moron has to stick in with a soup spoon. There ought to be a law."

Brook was thoughtful. "Do you think Becker is getting beaten?"

"Anybody's guess is good. Terry's got a heart and a wallop. That always gives him a chance.... O hell! Why don't Congress do something about soup?"

"We'll try the newspapers again in a little while."

"I'm all steamed up."

"I think you're in love."

"With what? Say, every time I think of love, I get what Terry calls an 'Irish tooth-ache.'"

"What kind is that?"

"It's like a real tooth-ache, only the pain is not in your face—if you follow me."

"You know Becker pretty well, don't you?"

"Kind of. We both like to dance. Boy, how he can dance! ...I hope his good eye ain't a sunset. It was a lucky punch."

"If he's half blind, why doesn't he quit the ring?"

"He wouldn't know how to quit anything."

"Was his bad eye punched out?"

"Yes and no. Don't shout it around, but he got in an auto smashup that made his right eye blind. He had trouble with the same eye before, though."

"I suppose you go to all the fights?"

"This is the first time I've missed any of his fights. I didn't want to throw the agency down and I needed the dough. Did you ever see Becker fight?"

"I never go."

"I like him best against heavyweights. You ought to of seen him kite big Strudel Parks out of the Queensboro ring a year ago. Terry's eye-trouble really started in that bout. The auto smashup finished it. Say, Terry had the bout all his own way—just like he started out tonight. He spills Parks with a left and the Strudel flopped like a dizzy moose that hears his wife calling from the woods. They say Strudel got some rosin on his glove while he is flapping the canvas like a seal. Anyway, he climbs up and clinches. While they are being broken from the clinch, Parks jabs his thumb into Terry's right eye."

"Was that what happened tonight?"

"Maybe. Would you please try the newspapers again, Mr. Brook?"

Brook learned nothing except the fight still was in progress.

"That Parks battle was interesting," she said. "After Terry gets the big palooka's Jack Horner in his eye, he says to his manager: 'Jeez, God! They's a big ball of fire in my head. Christ! my eye's gone dead.' Cripps, his manager, says to him: 'Can't you see none?' and Terry says: 'Not a God damned thing except a ball of fire and it burns.' Cripps says: 'What can we do about it? Should I throw some water in it?' Terry says: 'For the love of God pry open my lamp, because they's a ball of fire right in front of me.' Cripps holds it open with his fingers and Terry says: 'That's better. That's better.' Cripps says: 'What a tough break! I don't want to toss in the towel if we can help it.' Then Terry says: 'I'll do the best I can, but I wish to hell the ball of fire would go away.' The bell rings and Terry can't locate Parks. He misses with everything and the crowd gets on him as usual and boos him for clowning. Terry stalls the round and when he comes to his corner, Cripps says: 'Is it any better now?' Terry says: 'No; it's worse, if anything.' Cripps says: 'You mean you can't see nothing?' Cripps holds up his hand which has a sponge in it and asks Terry if he can see that. 'I can see a little out of one side, but it looks like you got six hands, with a big hunk of liver in each hand.' Cripps says: 'Maybe we ought to resign.' But Terry says: 'Like hell we will! I got to live with myself, and I can't live with myself if I ever quit. If I can get them hot pins out of my

lamp for a while I'll connect, and when I connect it will be like a plumber with a wrench.'"

"It's a lot like tonight's fight," Brook said.

"That's why I'm telling you, Mr. Brook. He's a great boxer, but he falls for some of the funniest, clumsy punches in the history of the world. Dempsey was the same way. A sucker for right hands.... Well, in the Parks fight, people are coming to Terry's corner, saying they bet on him, and why is he stalling against such a set-up as the Strudel? One of the deputy boxing commissioners goes to Cripps and says: 'If this fight looks bad, we'll hold up your end of the purse and maybe bar you for life.' Cripps tells the Commissioner: 'I got some stuff in the Cat's eye by mistake and it's stung him for a while. He'll get untracked pretty soon.' Terry goes in again, groping, and the crowd razzing. He has to clinch so he can get the Strudel spaced. Then, right after the breakaway, he uses the touch system and lets drive with a short left hook. Luck is with him, although he tells me it is the prayers of Father Swasey, a priest in Akron. He always says a few words when Terry fights."

"Then he won?"

"I told you he chased Parks over the ropes. He sends over the sleeper and the Strudel sinks like the *Vestris*, only quicker. He dreams for a while of them bells that used to ring when he was a fireman in Rockville Centre, Long Island."

"Then what?"

"He gets up at nine and Terry is facing him, his eyeball burning, and him saying: 'Here goes nothing!' Then

he tags Parks on the chin. The Strudel don't wait to fall down. He goes right over the ropes and never comes back. What a man!"

"What did he mean by: 'Here goes nothing'?"

"It's his trade-mark. Always says it when he's about to give the medical examiner some work."

"What about his eye?"

"He got drunk and claimed it would heal itself. He's careless."

"You said he prayed."

"No, I didn't. I said Father Swasey prayed for him."

"You mean Becker is religious?"

"Who? Terry? I don't think so. He never says anything. He gives a lot to charity and he don't make fun of your beliefs."

"He's not a good influence, Miss Evans, religion or no religion. Becker is a bad influence on any young girl. I hope you know that."

"Why pick on me, Mr. Brook? I ain't his girl."

"You are fond of him."

"Sure I am. As for the religious end of it, you'll have to count me out. I don't know about it. All I've heard is that Jesus give a sporting woman another chance. Let's get our brains off this detour. I wish that electrician would show up."

"Possibly Father Swasey is praying that your friend will reform."

"He prays for him to win his bouts."

"I can scarcely credit that."

"Why not?"

"No enlightened man would be a party to aiding a brutal spectacle through religious channels."

"Maybe not. Still, I understand that in the big war a lot of preachers buzzed God's ear off, squawking for a decision."

"You're talking nonsense."

"Have it your way, Mr. Brook. You're the customer."

Matty came in. He said a bulb had burned out. He began to tinker. Miss Evans looked at her watch. It was 10:33 o'clock. The fight had begun two minutes past ten.

"Are you good at figures?" she asked Brook.

"Why?"

"There are fifteen rounds in this fight," she said. "Each round is three minutes long, unless there is time out for a questionable foul, or a busted glove or something. There are fourteen one-minute rests between the rounds. Now get out your pencil and figure."

"I don't need a pencil." There was a note of pride in his voice. "Give me your problem."

She had her doubts. "O.K. Well, if each round is three minutes long and there is a minute rest between each round, and if the fight begins at two minutes past ten and it's now ten-thirty-five, how much have they fought?"

"In terms of rounds?"

"Check."

Brook whipped out his watch. "It's now 10:35:22. Allowing fifteen seconds for my reply, your men now are entering the second half of the second minute of the ninth round."

Miss Evans whistled her astonishment. "Maybe you

don't know the fight game, but you're a darb on the numbers."

Matty had resuscitated the radio. There was a noise like the ripping of an immense pair of trousers; then the voice of the ringside announcer...

"And what a fight it was, folks! What a fight!"

"There must of been a kayo," the electrician said.

Then the Announcer's voice again: "I'm trying to get Wild Cat Terry Becker, the new lighth heavyweight champion, to say a few words to the radio audience. Here, Terry! Over here.... Terry... Come on, champ... won't you say a few words to the ladies and gentlemen of the radio audience?"

Miss Evans was jumping up and down, whirling and clapping Brook's back. "Terry won! What did I tell you?"

Then a voice, a rather high-pitched one to be owned by a ring-tiger, came pantingly: "Well, that's that! I bowled him over. Gilbert give me a good fight; one of the hardest I ever had. It wasn't a lucky punch that made me look bad in the... in the... I don't know what round it was.... It was almost curtains.... I didn't wake up until I heard 'em counting him out. It wasn't lucky at all. I just was careless. Only one more thing, folks, before I go get rubbed down, and that is the fans. A lot of them don't like me. I want to say I'm sorry they don't, but I'm not surprised, because I don't like the fans either...."

The radio was suddenly quiet. "They faded him! They faded him!" Miss Evans said.

"What for?" Brook asked.

"I'll bet you an apple against an oil well that he began

raising hell. He could be so popular, too, if he only wouldn't say what was on his mind."

Brook was disappointed at the outcome of the battle. Instinctively he admired the man who had come back so gallantly and who stood unafraid before the audience of the air as well as the audience of the arena and spoke his mind. He felt a secret kinship with him. Brook, too, had been baited and ridiculed. Nevertheless, he would have liked to hear of Becker being bruised and beaten, for he believed that Enid had betrayed him for a long time with this prize fighter, cloaking her infidelities with the charity fund.

The radio interrupted his meditation. "This is Murray Lewin announcing. Wild Cat Terry Becker knocked out Gunboat Gilbert with a left to the jaw in the ninth round of a scheduled fifteen-round contest at Madison Square Garden, New York City. The knockout came after one minute and forty-one seconds of the ninth round had elapsed. Terry Becker is now recognized by the New York State Athletic Commission as the Lightweight Cham..."

From the station announcer, interrupting: "This fight, ladies and gentlemen, was broadcast through the courtesy of the *Challenge Soup Com...*"

From Miss Evans: "Turn the knob, Matty! Turn off that damned soup! I hope it chokes anyone that ever..."

Two heavy-set gentlemen, one of whom wore a derby tilted to one side, entered the room. Matty was preparing to take his radio set to his basement work-shop. When he

saw the intruders, he whispered huskily to Brook: "Holy Jeez! Dicks!" The electrician retreated precipitately. He left his radio, not stopping to collect the generous tip he had been promised.

The two weighty gentlemen were apparently mystified by the presence of the electrician and by the fact that he now was fleeing in the manner of the head of the Lot household from the environs of Sodom. The man with the derby hat acted as spokesman.

"Are you Adam Brook?"

For a moment Brook forgot that he was due to be compromised. Miss Evans was reclining on the double bed as a gesture of sincerity.

"I say, is your name Adam Brook?"

"Yes, that's my name."

The derby-wearer nodded to his assistant. The assistant produced a stenographer's pad and began to scribble notes. "And is that woman your wife?"

Brook hesitated. "Yes, that's Mrs. Brook."

The derby-wearer walked to the bed, his tone artificially aggressive. "Here, you!" She looked up. It was the twenty-sixth time she had been discovered by this same detective.

"Hello, Moe," she said.

Moe seemed disgusted. He turned to his assistant, a new man at the *Argus Agency*. "Hey, Flippen, don't put that down in the book. Leave that part out." Then he addressed Miss Evans with an attempt at dignity. "Is this man your husband?"

"Why, of course it is! What do you mean to infer?"

Moe signaled to Flippen. "Come on, Flip. We'll try to get the registration card, if they'll give it up without a subpoena. . . . S'long, Mr. Brook. Sorry." Moe tipped his derby, replaced it still farther over his left ear and gave the hat a knowing flick of the fingers. "And good night to you, *Mrs. Brook.*"

"Good night, Moe," she said. "See you next week."

So this was how a great sponge was dropped from the sky to wash away symbols from the slate of matrimony.

The girl was again in the closet, getting her coat and galoshes and hat. She was not long in departing. Adam watched her absently and wondered all sorts of things. She waved to him, opened the door and was gone.

Brook leaned over the bed and fancied the imprint of her slender body still lingered there. He stroked the coverlet and let his fingers explore until they touched the innocent sheets.

How long ago it seemed since he and the girl had been sitting beside the loud-speaker. He fingered the sheets. Sheets! Sheets! Pale, cool, crackling sheets . . . white pages on which one-third of a man's life is written. Eight hours out of every twenty-four are spent in sheets. . . . But no history had been written for him on the sheets he now was touching. Others had slept there, had dreamed there, and perhaps . . . Sheets. Birth on thee; Youth on thee; Wedlock on thee. Illusions of love, there on the sheets . . . and the last Sleep, with a sheet wrapping up Three-score-and-ten Years. . . . Death-bed sheet, that enfolds man's borrowed clay; a lumpy bundle to be delivered to a freshly opened earth-door. . . . Housewife Earth expects a bundle.

Brook picked up the tabloid newspaper from which the picture of the fighter had been clipped.... So, he always called out, "Here goes nothing," did he? A clenched fist driven to a bleeding mouth, a brain-shocked man drops to the dirty canvas. A thin-lipped, cruel smile.... Are we all nothing, going to a great and empty Nowhere?

What should a man do? Was it worth while to be clean and to demand cleanliness in others? What was this victory over the flesh? For a moment, Brook wondered if he had not, all his life, been in a smug slumber—a vagabond, asleep in the hayloft of desire.... As he packed his toilet articles and closed his grip, he almost groaned beneath the load of his poverty. Only a few months ago he had gloried in the things he could buy and the armies he could command in the world of materiality.... Now he felt as poor as an exiled serf....

The drone was being expelled from the hive.

Chapter Seven

AFTER the bout there was a crush at Becker's dressing room door, but Cripps would allow no one but Terry's handlers to enter. They remained there until midnight, Cripps putting a leech to the Wild Cat's puffed eye, which had not bled enough to suit the critical manager.

"I'm going to call a doctor," Cripps said.

"We won't have one," Terry said.

"But we can't take risks, now that we're in the big dough. See?"

"How's the Gunner coming?"

"They took him across the street."

"To *Polyclinic*?"

"Yeah."

"What happened to him?"

"You busted his jaw."

"I thought I felt something give."

"It had to when you let go with that left."

"He shouldn't of called me a drunken bum."

"That wasn't what he said."

"How do you know so much?"

"I heard it while you two was at the scales. See?"

"The hell you did."

"I heard it."

"Well, never mind it, Ernie. My head feels tight, like they was a iron band around my dome."

"Yeah, I heard it. The Gunner said to you: 'How's the society pimp comin' along?' I don't blame you for..."

"Can it, Ernie! How much is our end goin' to be?"

"A little over forty grand."

"We need it. I don't think we ought to show up at any night clubs tonight."

"Not with that pan of yours sticking out. Can you see better now?"

"Just so-so."

"We ought to do something for that eye."

"A couple of drinks will fix me up. Got any?"

"They's plenty at the hotel."

"Are they taking good care of the Gunner?"

"I hear they are pulling two front teeth and wiring the others together. He'll have to eat through a straw."

"He's got a lot of guts, Ernie."

"I sent a kid out to get him some flowers."

"I'll send his kids some presents tomorrow. We'll give him a return bout, Ernie."

"He won't fight you again. You're too tough."

"Well, see if his old lady wants anything. Was they any messages for me?"

"Hell, yes. From everywhere."

"Any from women?"

"You mean from a special one, don't you?"

"Yeah. Did she send any message?"

"Not a thing."

"Sure?"

"Sure."

"Maybe she'll telephone later. She knows where I'm putting up."

"Let's turn in. We both had a busy evenin'."

"O.K., but she must of sent a message."

"I looked out for it."

"Let's go."

"Wait till I see if the mob is hanging around. We got to be quiet tonight. See?"

"Be sure and ask the manager of the hotel to lay for a telephone call."

"I already did."

"Then let's go open a bottle."

"Hold onto my arm."

"Like hell I will! I'll bounce right out and into a cab."

"Well, watch yourself."

"Don't forget to buy some dolls for the Gunner's kids tomorrow, Ernie."

"I'll do it on my way back from the Boxing Commission offices with our check."

"Great big dolls. As big as hell. See?"

"I'll get the biggest they is. Let's take off."

They went out the Fiftieth street side of The Garden to avoid the crowd. They were driven to a downtown hotel to hide-out for the night. The manager of the hotel said there had been no telephone calls for the champion.

"If you want anything during the night," the manager said, "let me know and I'll do it personally. Just ring me."

"I won't want a thing," the Wild Cat said. "If I do, I'll not ring. I'll push over the building."

Chapter Eight

THE army of champion-chasers was not long in locating Terry Becker. They bore down on the hotel in droves. Cripps had been up late, sitting beside Terry's bed, telling him not to worry about the message that did not come. As early as seven in the morning, Mr. Cripps was roused to meet the tide of fair-weather friends and celebrity lovers. He stationed Rough-house Santry, a sparring partner, at Terry's door.

Terry had slept haphazardly. "It's funny there's no call," he said.

"It's early. How about something in the way of breakfast?"

"Order some sauerkraut juice for me."

"How about poached eggs and coffee?"

"I ain't hungry. Put up the blinds, Ernie. It's too dark in here."

"How about an alcohol rub to loosen you up?"

"No. Maybe I'll take a walk after I get that call."

"Why don't you just stay in bed and louse around all day?"

"Don't let anybody in, Ernie. Did you bring cards?"

"We'll send down for some. How's the eye?"

"I'll be able to see the cards."

By eleven o'clock the callers were so numerous that Cripps was compelled to engage an extra suite. He moved in and out, listening to the babble of ring-followers and explaining that the champion was still sleeping. The telephone bell in Becker's own suite rang constantly. He was afraid he would miss the call and insisted on answering the telephone himself. By noon, he tired of this, and asked his trainer, Goats Moran, to answer the calls and to look out particularly for one from a "Mrs. Brook."

"It's the only one I'll answer," he told Goats.

"There's a fellow on the 'phone who wants you to indorse a belt. He wants to call it 'The Terry Becker Belt'."

"Tell him I wear suspenders."

Goats gave the message: "He don't wear no belts." Goats then said to Becker. "This mug says it don't make no difference. You can indorse it."

"Tell him to get in touch with Gunboat Gilbert. He wears belts, but he wears them on his chin."

A group of show-girls were trying to get past Cripps and Rough-house Santry. "Make yourselves at home," Cripps said, "but Terry ain't seeing nobody at all. See?"

"When did he get his high-hat?" one of the girls asked.

"Well, he ain't entertaining," said Cripps.

A gentleman who represented a cigarette company conferred with Mr. Cripps. "I don't know what he'll say," Mr. Cripps confided. "He don't smoke. See?"

"All he has to do is pose with one of our cigarette

packages in his hand. I'll get him \$2,000 for the endorsement."

Cripps went into Terry's room, where the fighter was playing solitaire beside the telephone. "Maybe we should pick up some of this soft dough, Terry."

"We'll make plenty of dough, Ernie. Tell the gink I don't smoke anything but hop."

A representative of a newspaper syndicate called, seeking to become a "ghost writer" for the new champion. "We want a daily feature by Becker," the man said to Cripps. "He doesn't have to do a thing except sell us the use of his name. I, or one of the other boys, will write the stuff for him."

"What kind of stuff?"

"We'll settle that later. First we want his autobiography."

"I'll see," Cripps said. He went again to Terry's room. "They's a guy here who wants to sign you up to write some articles for a lot of newspapers. He offers us twenty-five per cent of the gross."

"What kind of articles?"

"They'll pay us for the use of your name, and one of their scribes will do all the work without even bothering you."

"What kind of articles, I asked?"

"The story of your life would be the first article."

Terry shuffled the cards. "It wouldn't get through the mails. No. Tell him nix. Where'd you put that other bottle, Ernie?"

"Behind the bathtub....Shouldn't we pick up some of this soft dough, Terry?"

"I'm not thinking of dough today. See?"

"Why don't you put in a call yourself?"

"I'll wait a while longer."

Sports writers dropped in, one after another, and Cripps ordered some more ice and ginger ale. "The Champ wasn't in a good humor, so I let him sleep it off," Cripps said.

The reporters insisted on seeing Becker. Cripps went once more to the room where Terry now was tearing up the cards. "I told you I don't want to see nobody, Ernie. What you trying to do? Turn the heat on?"

Ernie whispered: "You got to see the boys just a minute, Terry."

"I don't have to see nobody."

"Just for a little while, Ernie. The papers give you enough hell this morning about that radio talk where you razzed the fans. Let's be more tackful."

"Well, tell 'em only to stay a little while. I don't want to make a public talk out of that telephone call. See?"

"You could take it in another room."

"O.K. Lend me your corkscrew."

Five sports writers came in and Terry shook hands with them all. "I was just loafing around," he said.

"Whose your next opponent?" one of the men asked.

"That's up to Cripps. I'll fight anyone he picks."

"How about Willie Hart?"

"Sure, I don't mind fighting a nigger. I don't want a steady diet of boogies, but I don't draw no color line.

What do you hear about the Gunner? Is he hurt bad?"

"They've padlocked his jaw, but he'll be O.K."

"That's good. I'll drop over and see him sometime."

One of the reporters asked: "Just what did he say to you while you were weighing in yesterday afternoon?"

"Nothing except 'Hello.' Why?"

"We heard he said something."

"No, he didn't say nothing except 'Hello.'"

"Did he hurt you much?"

Terry grinned. "He kicked the be-Jesus out of me."

Mr. Cripps intervened. "Don't quote him on that. It won't look good. See?"

"It's the truth," Terry said. "He damned near licked me and you can print it if you want to."

"I guess he didn't come anywhere near licking you," a reporter said.

"Then I never want to get licked," said Terry. "Will you boys have a gargle with me?" He pointed to the bottle. "I'm getting ready for a two-weeks' souse, and you can print that if you want to."

"Not so fast, Terry," Cripps said. "These ain't the fellows that pans you in the papers. You know that. These are your pals."

"All right, pals," Terry said, "let's drink up and stay away from dames."

"We heard rumors that you had a bad right eye before you went into the ring last night," a reporter said.

"It's a lot of malarkey," Mr. Cripps hastened to say.

"Then there isn't any truth to it?"

Terry poured the drinks. "I been playing cards all

morning. How could I play cards with bum shutters?"

"We heard that just one of them was bad."

Cripps interrupted. "I circulated that report to bring down the betting. The odds was too long; the Champ and me wanted to put a bet down ourselves. See?"

The telephone bell rang. Terry told Goats to answer it. "If you fellows will excuse me, I got to tend to some business," Terry said. The reporters went to the extra suite where they were entertained by Cripps.

The telephone call was from an insurance man who wanted Becker to take out a policy on his hands. After Goats had taken care of this message and hung up, Becker said: "You go outside and stay at the door. Don't let nobody crash the gate; not even Ernie, till I tell you. See?"

Terry called Enid at *The Grosvenor-Plaza*, where she now was residing with her father and brother. The butler said she was not in.

"I think she's in," Becker said. "So tell her I want to talk to her and it's important. See?"

"I beg your pardon, sir, but she is *not* in."

"Then put her old man on the wire."

"Mr. Olds is not in, either."

"Listen, you! If you don't want to lose your job, get one or the other of them. They're in, and you lie like hell!"

The butler hung up. Terry poured himself a drink and then lay on the bed looking at the ceiling.

Chapter Nine

CRIPPS had to go to the Flatiron Building at 3 o'clock to get the check from the Boxing Commission. Before he left he urged Terry to order something to eat.

"I'll be right back, Terry. What you so mopy about?"

"I dunno. I keep drinking but I don't get drunk. Don't forget to buy dolls for the Gunner's kids. He's got four of 'em. Big dolls. Great big ones. See?"

"On my way back from the Commission."

The noise made by the hangers-on came through the doors. "I wish'd you could clear out them lugs," Terry said. "Can't they punch the bag somewheres else than right next door?"

"I'll ast them to pipe down. Say, Terry, I wish to hell you'd get that dame off your mind. It makes you mopy."

"Maybe she'll call later."

"If you'd put away a steak, it would pick you up. I'll order a steak. A rare one, burned on the outside like you like it. See?"

Terry took up a blackthorn walking stick. "That was swell of you to give me this present, Ernie. You always been my pal."

"That Irish bayonet onct belonged to the original Jack Dempsey, 'The Nonpareil.' You're the greatest fighter since his time, Terry. Maybe better."

"He died of the con, didn't he?"

"Yes, he had bum pipes. My old man seconded him against Johnny Reagan. They fought on the beach for forty-seven rounds. The tide come up several times and they had to lay off till the ring could be moved. The old man said they was up to their ankles several times. Dempsey was spiked and it hurt like hell when the salt water got into the cuts."

"He was plenty game, they say."

"A ringer for you, Terry. I thunk of him when the Gunner nailed you with that sucker punch last night. The old man was behind Dempsey the time George LaBlanche beat him. That was a lucky punch, too. The pivot blow, see? Dempsey had been leading until the thirty-second round."

"I always liked Ketchel best of all. I wish'd I had seen him. You liked Ketchel."

"They'll talk of him a long time, just like they'll talk of you."

"I saw Fitzsimmons in Akron once, after he turned evangelist. He must have stripped down funny."

"Yeah, he had long, spindly legs and great shoulders and arms. His hands was brittle, though. You been lucky about not busting your hands, what with tossing 'em so careless."

"I guess my heart's brittle."

"Like hell! You got a great motor."

"Well, don't forget them dolls. Make 'em give you blonde ones with curls. I need another bottle, Ernie."

"Look under your mattress. You'll find four pint flasks."

The hangers-on were shouting and singing. "The more they yell, the more lonesome I get. It's a lot of hooley to be champion."

"You ought to be happy as hell."

"I wish I was back in Akron, making my \$12 per. Gee, I'll never forget how full of pep I used to be when I come home on Saturday nights with my pay. I always washed up and then took a moll to a dance and drank beer. I had a fine old lady, too. But my old man is a banana. When my old lady died and my old man kept on living, I said to myself the Grim Reaper pulled a boner. I wish my old lady was alive now and I'd go home to her."

"Could I get you some lamb chops?"

"No, I got a pain in my head. I wish my nose wasn't stopped up. I get tight over the beezer."

"I wish you'd have a doc look you over. Let me call one."

"Go get them dolls. . . . You never knew my old lady; did you?"

"No, but I met your old man, and he was a greaseball."

"You said it. I was sorry though when they put him away. Ten years is a long stretch."

"Well, he shouldn't ought to fight with knives. It was throwin' away good dough to hire all them lawyers."

"I would of spent it on dames."

"I guess so. But you'd of had something to show for it."

"Ernie, there's only one woman now."

"She sure knocked you for a loop, didn't she?"

"The rest of them was like chewing gum, Ernie. The longer I had 'em the weaker the flavor got. This one is different."

"I hope she don't give you the run-around."

"Where did you pick up that nail? What makes you say that?"

"I dunno, Terry. I guess I might as well tell you. I tried to get her on the 'phone this noon and her butler says he has word for us not to call no more. I didn't want to say nothing, but..."

"Is that on the level?"

"Yep. So, if I was you I'd order some pork chops or something; get drunk and we'll go to Montreal for a week. See?"

Terry seemed to droop as he sat in his chair. "Go on, Ernie, get our check and don't forget them dolls."

"I won't forget."

The 'Wild Cat sat for an hour, looking stolidly at the wall, as though it were a motion-picture screen on which a tragedy was being depicted. He wanted so much to telephone once again, but a fierce pride restrained him. He wanted to pick up bottles and hurl them through the window, but he gripped the arms of the chair instead. He would have liked to get up and hammer against the wall until his knuckles were split. But he sat there, looking

straight ahead. The noise of the revelers came like the roar of water rushing over a fall.

"Fighters and whores!" he said to himself at last. "They end up bad. Dempsey dead of con; Ketchel shot over a woman—killed at twenty-three; Kid McCoy in San Quentin Prison for murder and now driving the prison fire truck and dreaming of old triumphs; Ad Wolgast in the nut-house, white-haired and still imagining himself training for Bat Nelson. Nelson, too, once admired for the great heart that he had, now is spoken of as a pest; Les Darcy, dead of pneumonia—although most writers called it a broken heart. Bill Brennan shot by a gangster. What's the use? The crowd slaps your back while you're up, and when you're down you're a dime a dozen."

Terry could stand it no longer. He picked up the telephone and got Enid's number.

"Get this, and get it straight," he told the butler, who again reported that Enid was "not in." "Get it through your head, see? I mean business. You'll tell her I'm on the wire and must speak to her, or so help me God, I'll be up and tear your damned building down and pull your whiskers out by the roots! See?"

There was a delay and finally Enid got on the wire. "Well?" she asked. "What is it?"

"I had to talk to you, Enid."

"Go ahead and talk."

"But I can't understand. I...well, gee! You never called up or nothing, and when I called... Why, I thought you'd be glad I won."

"I'm glad you won, Terry. I was going to have the Fund Committee write you a note of thanks."

"But, my God! What do I care about committees? I didn't fight for no committee. I fought for you. Gee, Enid! That's what pulled me through last night, thinking of you. That's how I come back when it looks like I am being cuffed around. I'm a champion, but you treat me like a pork-and-beaner. Did I do something?"

"No, Terry, you didn't do anything. You won and you're the champion. Isn't that what you wanted?"

"Well, yes, I wanted to be champion. But I've waited all night and all day to hear from you."

"Listen, Terry, haven't you ever left a girl? Pleasantly, I mean. Gone away rather sudden and never came back?"

"Sure. But what's that got to do with us?"

"I don't like to talk over the telephone."

"Why don't you run up? I'll get everybody out of here. See?"

"No, I'll not run up. I'll try to tell it to you in a few words, and I hope you'll understand."

"Well, give me some reason, because I'm kind of crazy."

"You and I met, Terry, at a peculiar time in my affairs. I liked you tremendously, just as I do now. You're a great human being, possibly too great. Can't you see I wouldn't dare fall in love with you?"

"You ain't saying you *weren't* in love with me?"

"I didn't let myself be in love, Terry."

"But my God! Can't you come up? I don't want to say

things over the wire, either. Aw, come on up, Enid. I got to see you."

"I can't come up, Terry. Now... or ever."

"Damn it, then, I will say things! If you didn't love me, why did you kid me? Do you think I am a dumb cluck? What was I to think when we was together out in the country? Wasn't that love? Jesus! Was you just giving me some kind of a tip? The hell with it! If you think your body is too swell for me, let me tell you I got a body that any of your damned tony-bellies would give millions for. I'm not in your class, huh?"

She broke in. "I'm listening, Terry, because this is the last time I ever will listen."

"You lie! You're listening because you ain't got the guts to hang up. You're listening because you are afraid. See? I know what you are now. You're a tart, but you ain't got nerve enough to be a real tart and take the breaks that comes with being one. And another thing. You would of belonged to me more than you did if I had of beat you. Yes, you would! I could see it in your eyes every time we was together. It was plain, that look in your eyes. You ached to have me beat you. You know that, don't you?"

"Then why didn't you beat me?" Her voice was very calm.

He was shouting into the telephone. "Because I was sap enough to love you! That's why. I loved you, do you hear? I love you now. But you've two-timed me with your..."

"I've heard about all you have to say, Terry. Our interlude is over. We live in separate worlds."

"The hell we do! We live in one world. The same lousy, yellow world. I breathe the same as you do. We both eat and sleep and sweat. Don't pull that on me! The only difference between me and the men you know is that I have a finer, cleaner, stronger body, no matter how I've lushed and been with dames. You once said I was ignorant. Well, I'm smart as hell now. See? I'm smart enough to know I'm a champion and you're a selfish, no-good bitch!..."

She had hung up. The pain in his head was driving him frantic. He reached under the mattress and got a bottle. He didn't wait to use the corkscrew. He knocked the glass flask against the metal of the bed and drank from the jagged, neckless bottle. The glass cut his lips. Blood and spilled liquor trickled down his chin.

Ernie Cripps entered the room. He held four huge dolls in his arms. He stood at the doorway, sad and mystified.

"I brung the dolls," he said. "Muldoon sent his regards and hopes you will cut out so much boozing."

Terry wrested the dolls from Ernie's arms, hurled them to the floor and stepped on their faces.

"I'm goin' to call a doctor," Ernie said. "You're screwy."

Chapter Ten

MRIPPS tried repeatedly to see Enid and failed over a period of two weeks. Finally he prevailed on her chauffeur to deliver a message, saying it was a question of life or death. She consented at last to receive the pugilistic mentor in her father's studio at *The Grosvenor-Plaza*.

The afternoon call of Ernie Cripps was prefaced by an hour of domestic uproar in the Olds' household. There were quarrels all 'round. Archie figured prominently in the first skirmishes, insisting on hearing a radio broadcast of a detective story while his father was trying to read the *Eclogues* of Virgil in Latin. The boy also found it necessary to set up his toy-soldiers on the studio floor and with Mr. Olds as the pivotal center of manœuvres.

Mr. Olds finally leaped up to turn off the radio. As he did so, he stepped on a toy cannon, the axle of the tiny ordnance penetrating his bedroom slipper and piercing his foot. The enraged father plucked the axle from his sole and, roaring with pain and anger, caught Archie and began to wallop his posterior with the flat of a toy sword.

Enid and the governess came hurrying to the studio. "You big bully!" Enid said, rescuing Archie.

"He's worse than Lieutenant Lahr," Olds roared. "And I'm giving him the same treatment. I wish it was a broadsword!"

"I'll get my friend Becker to sock him," Archie yelled.

"I'm going to send him to military school," Olds said.

Enid persuaded Archie to go with Miss Whittlesey to the nursery, promising him some cakes. Mr. Olds sat down, massaging his wounded foot. "A dose of lock-jaw would just about terminate my expedition to Tahiti."

"You've got a most ungodly temper. Why don't you pick on someone your size?"

"Oh, shut up! I never let any wenches dictate to me and I'm too old to begin now."

"Maybe you're getting too old for wenches, too."

"The hell I am! And by the way, why didn't you consult me about asking that Cripps fellow to come up?"

"Oh! so I have to consult you about everything, do I?"

"You know what I mean. You promised me you were through with that fighter."

"Keep your shirt on. I'll see anyone I want."

"I'll throw him down the elevator shaft."

"You'll mind your own business; that's what you'll do."

"Maybe it isn't my business! The hell it isn't! I don't mind you leading your own life, but I do object to having you known as a prize fighter's moll. Isn't that a pretty way to do?"

"If you want me to leave you, just keep talking that way."

"Well, you promised to have nothing more to do with Becker. Didn't you? Didn't you, now?"

"Well, I kept my promise. So what in hell are you crabbing about?"

"But you're seeing his manager. He's just scheming to drag you back to Becker."

"The man doesn't live who can drag me anywhere."

"That's what I always thought, but you mystified me during your . . . whatever it was with Becker. What *was* it? Were you in love with him, for Christ's sake?"

"You wouldn't understand."

"Aw, come on. Tell me."

"What for? I'm human the same as you are."

"Sure. I know that. You wouldn't be my daughter if you weren't. I don't blame you for anything."

"Then forget it."

"Go ahead, then, damn it! I raised you to be independent; not to be licked by anything, not even love. So you're going to leave your old father for a prize fighter, are you? Me that has worked and painted until blood spurted from ears and eyes. For what? For you! I *bled* for you! Now you're throwing me over."

"Oh, for the sake of God! I'm not in love. I'm not leaving you. I hope you never acted this way with your women."

"Don't you go telling me how to handle women! Damn it, Bibs! Why must you see this Cripps?"

"For no reason at all, except I want to be fair. Get this through your head. I don't love Becker. It was just an

interlude. I said I was human. Well, figure it out for yourself."

"Then you gave yourself to him?"

"Did you give yourself to that McCreery woman?"

"I see. I see. Well, it's all over then, and you won't go see Becker?"

"Why should I?"

"That's my girl! Love 'em and leave 'em. Count Ranck wants to go to Tahiti with us."

"I'd rather go alone with you. Ranck gets too serious."

"That's what I told him. 'You're not the man for Bibs,' I said. 'You're too serious.' Those were my very words. Don't go getting married again, Bibs."

"Not a chance."

"Not even a companionate marriage."

"I'm going to stay with you. Still..."

"Still what?"

"I might decide to step out once in a while."

"But not with Becker."

"That's all over. It couldn't go on."

"Of course it couldn't. He wasn't in your class."

"It's too bad."

"He'll get over it."

Ernie Cripps was announced and the sight of the manager made Mr. Olds' blood sizzle. "You are seeing my daughter against my orders," he said.

"Sorry, Governor," said Mr. Cripps, "but when a pal is in trouble, you don't care who orders what. See?" He turned to Enid. "Can I talk with you by ourselves?"

Olds stood up, shaking his fist. "You'll say whatever it is while I am here. And make it brief, too."

"O.K., Governor. Well, Miss Brook, Terry is dying. Is that brief enough?"

"We can't help that," Olds said. "If that's all..."

Enid was pale. "What are you saying, Cripps?"

"My pal is dying and I want you to come see him before he goes upstairs."

Olds was about to speak, but Enid motioned for him to keep quiet. "I'm terribly upset to hear this, Cripps. I'll do anything I can to help him. What's wrong?"

Cripps hesitated. "Can I speak plain?"

"My father and I have no secrets. If you mean it's something about my friendship for Terry, go ahead."

"If you'd come see him, everything would be better."

"I'll do anything, Cripps, but it wouldn't do for me to see him now."

"You don't know how much good it would do."

Olds cut in. "You're right, Bibs. Don't go see him at all. If he needs any money, we'll..."

Cripps spoke slowly from the workable side of his warped mouth. "We don't need money. All he needs is you, Miss Brook."

"I wish I could explain," she said, "just so you would understand how impossible it is for me to go to him. You'll think I didn't care; that I was just leading him on. What can I say? I really thought a lot of him, a whole lot. But that's in the past, Cripps. Haven't you ever thought a lot of a girl and then left her, still thinking she was all right, but not all right for you?"

"I never left a pal," Cripps said.

"But what good would it do? My seeing him now? It wouldn't help him and it wouldn't help me. I wish I could make it plainer, but I can't."

"You're plain enough, Miss Brook. Too plain."

She was nettled. "Now look here. No matter what you or anyone else says or thinks, I have a fine feeling toward Terry Becker. If he should die, I'd take it to heart. But to be perfectly frank, Cripps, he wanted more than I could give. He wanted to marry me. That was unthinkable."

"I get you, Miss Brook. You needn't say no more. You mean we ain't in your class. That's right. We ain't. I ain't here to ast you to do nothing except come for a few minutes and make it easier for him. I'd think you'd do that even for your dog."

"Well, I suppose there's no other way..."

Olds got up again. "Cripps, I've had enough of this! I repeat, we'll do anything we can for Becker. But you've got to quit annoying my daughter."

Cripps raised his brows. "Annoy? That's a classy word, ain't it? Well, my pal Terry has been annoyed, too. He's been out of his head, callin' for somebody he loves. That's damned annoyin', ain't it?"

"See here, Cripps..."

Enid interrupted. "You are not trying to fool me, are you?"

Cripps' face showed deep lines. "Telephone Dr. Corbett, the guy I met here that day. I called him in yesterday when Terry took a bad turn."

"What did he say?"

Cripps was shaking. "Oh, Miss Brook! It ain't only he's dyin'. It's that he's got to go upstairs in the dark. Oh, Jesus! Don't let him die in the dark. He's blind! See? Blind and callin' out for you until it's somethin' awful. Just lyin' there and callin': 'Enid! Enid! Here goes nothin'!' Jumpin' Jesus! If he'd only not say: 'Here goes nothin'!' His old battle signal. You don't know how tough it is to see a pal go away in the dark... with fish-hooks in his heart..."

Enid stopped him. "Wait here till I get my wraps."

Olds sought to restrain her. "Now see here, Bibs. You're not going to traipse there without me."

"You shut up! This is my show."

"I'm just warning you, Bibs."

"You can go to hell!"

Cripps then did something he had seen done in the motion pictures, but which he never would have dreamed of doing himself. He took Enid's hand and kissed it.

They left Olds raving and swearing in his studio and rode to Terry's hotel in Enid's limousine. Cripps said: "Tell the driver to step on it, Miss Brook. If we get pinched, I'll square it. I knowed you still loved him."

She stirred from a strange silence. "Listen, Cripps, and don't make the same mistake twice. I don't love him. Do you hear me? I don't love him! I'm simply trying to be fair."

Cripps said no more. A tire-chain broke on a rear wheel and banged against a fender. A white vapor came from the chauffeur's deep fur-collar as he breathed the cold air. Snow was falling and the voice of the city seemed remote and dim.

Chapter Eleven

DR. CORBETT explained that Terry was rousing from an opiate; that he might be rational or he might talk disconnectedly. One could not predict much about this fighter, so unusual was he in stamina and temperament.

"We're operating on him tomorrow morning," continued Dr. Corbett. They were talking in the sitting room of the champion's suite. Cripps had gone to look at the mumbling patient.

"Isn't there any chance for him to get well?"

"I'll be able to tell more about it tonight. They didn't call me until yesterday; it was rather late. We have had consultations and X-rays, but the plates were fogged."

"But you have an idea, haven't you?"

"The skull-floor seems to have been fractured and there's a growth obstructing the nasal passages. It's a risky operation under the circumstances. It's a double-operation, involving the eyes. Ordinarily I would wait for the eyes, but we can't."

"What about his eyes?"

"Gone. Marcossou of *The Eye, Ear, Nose and Throat Hospital* was here this morning."

"Will he be permanently blind?"

"Marcosson's going to remove the eyes after I go into the sinus."

She recoiled. "I want to go to him."

"If he's in one of his deliriums, don't do anything but hold his hand. If he rouses and speaks coherently, you may talk to him. He knows he is blind, so don't hesitate to answer him if he brings up the subject. He's almost sure to, and it makes him furious when we hedge."

"Does he know about tomorrow? ...the removal..."

"It's a messy case all 'round. He won't let us take him to the hospital for some fool reason. He's stubborn and we've got to operate here. He doesn't know about the eye-operation. Cripps is accepting responsibility for that. It's got to be."

They opened the door to Terry's room. Cripps had been on his knees. He rose, rather embarrassed, and the nurse came from the bathroom with a solution to drip on the bandages that shielded the upper portion of the fighter's face.

Dr. Corbett whispered to Enid: "I'm going to look at the new plates." He gave instructions to the nurse for preparing the sitting room for the operation next day. "We'll operate along about 10 o'clock, Miss O'Brien." He whispered again to Enid: "Sit beside him if you want."

Enid removed her wraps, and Cripps and the nurse left the room with the doctor. Enid peered into Terry's face. There was a smile there that horrified her. So cynical and defiant was that smile. She remained very still and listened to his breathing.

How Becker became aware of her presence was a mystery to Enid. She knew he could not smell her perfume, for his nostrils were as dead as were his bandaged eyes. Yet he sensed her presence. She had not yet touched him. Perhaps he had heard the doctor's whispered invitation for her to sit beside the bed.

As though to explain her wonderment, Terry said: "I used to slip or block punches without even lookin' at my opponent. Everybody just laughed when I claimed I didn't have to look to see what I felt was comin'... And that's how I know you're here, Enid, sittin' by the bed..."

She leaned over and kissed the cynically smiling lips. "I meant to come sooner," she lied. "I'm going to stay here."

"No kiddin'? You mean stay till I get well?"

"Until you get well, and after that. I'm never going away at all."

He felt her face with his strong fingers, touching her cheeks and eyelids, letting his fingers remain, almost enviously, at her eyes. "That's swell, Enid. So you're going to stay with me always?"

She bit her lips, as though to chew a lie to pieces. "Yes, Terry; always."

He took his hands from her face. She turned her eyes from the disturbing smile. Then he said: "Do you know something?"

"What?"

"It won't be as hard as you think."

"What do you mean? Nothing is hard for me. Things are hard for you. I want to make them easier."

"Yes, and I get you complete. And it's swell. But you're not going to have to be here long."

"We'll both be here a long time."

"Is that so? Well, honey, the Big Boy up in the sky is carrying a pasteboard sign around the ring and the sign says it's the fifteenth and last round of a championship battle. Do you follow me, or do I have to..."

"Don't talk like a fool, Terry. You're going to be all right."

He spoke indifferently. "I got quiet all of a sudden. At first I went nuts. That was the night Cripps claims I busted some dolls. He shouldn't of ribbed me so strong. I know and you know—everybody knows—I never would step on no dolls. Why in hell would I do that?"

She fancied he was bordering on delirium. Still, he spoke confidently and quietly. He went on: "I got drunk, naturally. My head felt like they was ten goats inside, butting against my skull. In the morning I got up. It was dark. I had been dreaming something and I felt my way to the window and put up the blinds. No light. It must be morning, I thinks. I am sure I hear a lot of traffic in the street. I go along the wall and push the button for the light. No light. Jeez! I thinks. No light. See? Well, it ain't exactly a surprise. I been lookin' for trouble. But it's a jolt. I think the craziest things. First I wonder if the booze was bad and had gummed up my lamps. But I have a feeling what is wrong. Then I go clean daffy. I'm not as game as they say. First I falls all over the floor and chews the edge of a rug. Get up, you yellow son of a bitch, I tells myself. Get up and don't dog it. I hate to say so, Enid,

but I am afraid. Then I laugh and yell: 'You're fightin' a nigger. You're fightin' Kid Dark and he's got your dauber down.' I cry and yell and say I don't want to end up on no park bench. I remember seein' that blind guy who raps his cane along Forty-eighth Street. And I remember how I seen him smile. It makes me sore. What in hell does he smile about? Then I hear Ernie comin' in and I make out I am all right and I lay on my bed. I ast him what time is it, and he says it is noon. Somehow when he says noon, I go crazy. I don't remember nothing much from then till right now, Enid. And right now I suddenly become calm. And I suddenly know you are sittin' beside me and I am glad and it don't matter a good God damn."

"There, Terry. There. There."

"And nothin' matters. I am booked up to meet the two champions, Old Kid Dark and Old Kid Death."

"Are you in much pain now?"

"Not so much as while ago. They been shooting me full of hop. But my head is in a bad way. I feel like Mr. Zero is inside my head passing out my brains for a lot of bums to eat."

"Should I sit here and rub your hands until you go to sleep?"

"No, just set there and make believe you love me."

"I don't have to make believe, Terry. I do love you."

He sighed. "Let's not talk about it. I know all the answers. I had to go blind before I could see."

"Do you want me to read to you?"

"No, but if you'll be awful careful about movin' me

sudden, I'd like to hold my head at your breast just a minute."

She was fearful of moving him, but she decided to do as he said. "Can you raise up? Are you allowed to?"

The terrible smile again showed on the lips of the bandaged face. "It's my dyin' request, as they say."

"Oh, please don't talk. Please! Please!"

"I talk about it because it's got me scared stiff. Who ever said Terry Becker was game?"

She sat on the bed and raised him as gently as she could. He had lost little weight and his physique seemed iron-hard, but he wasn't able to help himself much. The load of his wide shoulders and deeply-thewed torso was a heavy one. He groaned once and she begged him to lie back, but he said no; he wanted to rest his head against her bosom.

She held him to her breast for a few seconds. Then he said he'd have to lie back. "It's all I wanted," he added. "If anyone else ever tries to put his head there, you can tell him for me that Terry Becker's shadow always will be between him and you."

She was silent. Then he said: "What a heel I am to be recitin' 'The Kid's Last Fight'! I ought to be so glad you're here that I'd talk of somethin' nice. Let's talk about roses."

"You like them, don't you?"

"Yeah, I love roses. Funny, too, I like white ones best. They brought a bunch of white ones to my old lady's funeral.... For the love of God! Can't I think of nothing else? I don't know the names of many flowers. Orchids,

of course. I used to blow in lots of dough on orchids. They're like cabbage, compared with roses. White ones especially are swell."

"I'll get you some white ones this evening?"

"Is it *night*? My God! Is it *night*?"

"Why, no. It's only 6 o'clock."

"Are the lights on the streets yet?"

"No. It's still daylight."

"Put all the blinds up, Enid."

She went to the windows and raised the blinds. "There you are."

"Are they up?"

"Yes."

"Would you mind pulling them down again and shooting them to the top so's I can hear 'em bang against the rollers?"

She did as he requested. He listened eagerly to the blinds as they raced to the very top. She went again to the bed and took his hands, studying the thick thumbs and the muscles that stood out like broom-handles on his forearms.

"Just think, Enid. I always was a night-owl. I wasted all the daytime. Gee! I'd like to see the daylight on big buildings. I remember seein' daylight fall on that metal stuff of the Chrysler Buildin'. Gee, but it was bright! I bet Ernie wouldn't have to ask me twice to get up and go on the road mornings.... Say, tomorrow, I want them to put me in my old brown dressing gown, the one I always wear into the ring. Will you promise?"

"I think they'll have to put you in one of their own hospital gowns, Terry."

"I want my old dressing gown. No dressing gown; no operation!"

"All right, I'll promise. Now we mustn't talk any more."

"O.K., Enid. Remember what I said about my shadow. I mean it."

"I love you, Terry."

"Like hell you do. But it sounds good. You better tell the nurse to give me another shot in the arm."

Before the drug took effect, Terry's mind appeared to be bobbing like a cork in a whirlpool. Enid found his delirious monologue hard to bear. Finally he said:

"It's a lie! I never stepped on them dolls. Why, Jesus alive! What would I do that for? You know I don't go around hurting kids! I love kids."

He broke out profanely, talking of many things and breathing erratically. Just before he went to sleep, he said: "Anyway, with my head splittin', why would I be thinkin' of beating up kids? I wouldn't hurt no little girls."

Enid sent to her apartment for her night-clothes. A cot was brought to Terry's room for her use. But she did not sleep at all that night and when dawn came, she waited for the surgeons with a feeling of bitter resentment against them, against life, against herself.

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Chapter Twelve

THE sitting room looked so bleak and bare as two nurses worked, one of them removing the curtains and hangings and the other daubing the windows with *Bon Ami* so that light could enter but no outsider could see into the operating chamber. The woodwork was gone over with damp cloths, the fireplace was covered with a large sheet. The hotel was on a dusty street and towels were folded against the window-bases. The rug was taken up, the floor scrubbed and sheets were put down over four thicknesses of newspapers. A table had been brought from the hospital together with other accoutrements for the dual-operation. The heat was turned on and electric stoves supplemented the steam-radiators.

Terry was examined by the doctors at 9 o'clock. He asked to speak to Enid. "It's going to be all right," she said.

"I'm a champion," he said.

"A great champion."

"Maybe not so great, but a champion. Give me a kiss."

She kissed him. The attendants put him on a stretcher. They carried him through the door. "I want her to come

with me until you get me under," he said. Dr. Corbett nodded to Enid. She came into the operating room.

"Hold my hand once more," he said.

"I'll be waiting, Terry," she said. "Good luck."

"So long, Enid. You been wonderful. Will you have Cripps call up Father Swazey long distance? Tell him to say the words for me as usual. So long, sweetheart. And thanks for puttin' me in my old brown dressing gown. O.K., doc. Slip us the perfume bottle, doc, and call your shots. See?"

TERRY was a long time gone, Enid thought. And when they finally did bring him to his bed, it seemed he hardly was breathing at all. All day she sat beside him while stimulants were administered.

"He seemed a fair enough risk," Dr. Corbett told Enid. "But his heart is misbehaving. I hardly looked for that. He had such a fine heart."

Late at night Terry still failed to regain consciousness. Cripps came in and out of the room, twisting his hands and trying to control himself. "Stand here beside me," Enid said to Cripps. "Hold up the best you can. He's making a great fight of it."

Cripps shook his head. "No, he ain't making no fight at all. I can feel he ain't. I never knew him to quit before."

"He isn't quitting."

"Yes, he is, Miss Brook. It kills me to say so, but he's quittin'. He just don't want to live. O God!"

"Pull yourself together, Cripps. He'll come to before long."

Cripps stood silently for a long time. It was nearly midnight now and Dr. Corbett took Enid aside. "We've done all we can," he said. "I don't think he'll pull through."

She went back to the bed. Dr. Corbett went downstairs to get something to eat. He had been constantly beside the fighter since 9 o'clock in the morning.

"What did the doctor tell you, Miss Brook?"

"Nothing."

"Then why did he pull you to one side? Please tell me. I'll keep hold of myself. Terry's my pal. I ought to know how he is."

"The doctor said he was very ill."

Cripps thought a while. "There's one chance of waking him up, Miss Brook. Now don't you interfere." He looked at the nurse and said: "And don't you interfere, either. I'm goin' to bring Terry to and get some fight into him. I won't let him quit this way."

"Please don't do anything," the nurse said. "The doctor won't allow it."

Cripps leaned over the fighter. "Don't worry," he said to the nurse. "I know what I'm doin'." He put his lips close to Terry's ear. Then he began counting, distinctly and slowly: "One! Two! Three!" He paused. "Get up, Terry. You're not hurt much. Four! Five!" The fighter's hands, which had been spread fanwise and palms down on the sheets, began to twitch. "That's my old pal," Cripps called to him. "Get up, Terry. Six! Seven! Don't let them

count you out. Get up at nine and go into a clinch. Eight! Nine!"

To the amazement of the nurse and Enid, both of whom stood tremblingly in the presence of this scene, Terry's great arms seemed to come to life. His breath was drawn in. He was struggling to a sitting position. Then they heard him ask feebly: "What round? . . ."

"Last round, Terry, old boy. Stick it out."

The nurse feared she had permitted something wrong and began jiggling the telephone hook. She asked the dining-room captain to send Dr. Corbett at once.

Terry raised his hands slowly, painfully, in a caricature of defense. Then he fell back, smiling, and said distinctly and in a clear voice:

"Here goes nothing!"

The nurse dropped the telephone receiver and ran to the bed. Her eyes were wide and eloquent. Cripps looked dumbly at the nurse's eyes and then at the bandaged face.

"He's gone upstairs," said Cripps. "But he didn't quit. See?"

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PART SIX

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Chapter One

So much adverse publicity attended Enid's divorce action that Adam Brook became morose and fearful of showing himself in public. He traveled in a limousine with drawn blinds. Hitherto eager for mention in public print, he now shrank from newspapers and canceled his subscriptions to several that headlined the divorce. Finally he directed his secretary to read the newspapers, clipping for him world news, political and financial articles. He even considered purchasing a newspaper property. He would publish the sort of journal he believed a respectable citizen should read—no scandal, no police news, no essays on current sexual antics. He was dissuaded because of chaotic market conditions and the need for his personal leadership to conserve Brook Utilities, Inc.

His generalship in business, while not so amazingly sustained as of other days, still was superb during market wobbings. His genius functioned brilliantly, but the periods of such functioning were comparatively brief, and were followed by mystifying despondencies and erratic changes in policy. The daring of his strokes, his lightning-speed, carried his firm through four major crises that threat-

ened disaster. But always he kept thinking of Enid and of the domestic debacle; something seemed to have died inside him.

Brook found solace in the fact that the White House regarded him as an expert on farm-problems and had consulted him regarding the wheat situation. He tried to forget his sorrows by plunging into the riddle of the cereals, which had befuddled two administrations. More and more he thought of the early days when the earth seemed to have spoken to him as he walked with bare feet in the furrows. He believed he had a close relationship with all who worked the soil. He found himself sitting at the teakwood desk, a mountain of government wheat estimates and agricultural department reports before him, thinking of the farmer. He would go through crop reports from Liverpool, Buenos Aires and Bombay; sheaves of reports from Chicago brokers; cables from world marts—all expressing contradictory opinions concerning the ultimate world surplus, which in the final analysis must set the price of wheat. Then he would drift into dreams of spring that now was dancing with scarves of green and solar gold. He thought of great brown fields and of steel-shares that bit into the earth's crust; of bird-songs and the sweaty back of the maker of furrows; of earthworms that came into the world of light; of clods, stippled with moisture, upturning.

Few, if any, of his lieutenants could know that the great Adam Brook went through his commercial rituals with an agony of emptiness, with a burning desire for clarification of soul. He pondered and pondered, trying to

settle on some colossal gesture, unattended by the customary publicity that had set him apart as a public benefactor—some gesture designed for the exclusive satisfaction of his own psyche. What would the gesture be? He studied the Chronology of the Emperor as though he were a Tarquin consulting the Sibylline books. Daily he read letters of Napoleon corresponding to dates on which he searched the writings of The Emperor—seeking for hints that might lead to an acceptance of life as it was—not as he had found it, a welter of shams and futilities. He drank black coffee and ate sparingly.

And so the weeks passed.

Although he had grave doubts concerning the wisdom of the Administration's tariff policy—envisioning reprisals by America's best foreign customers—Brook believed whole-heartedly in the Government's decision to uphold the wheat market.

He paused one day while dictating a letter to the White House. The Administration had pledged relief to the farmer. Brook, in his letter, was pledging his personal support to the Administration. He was convinced that the purpose was sound, though the mechanism was unproven.

"I want to show you something in The Emperor's room," he said to Ellen Gage.

She closed her note-book and followed him into the ante-chamber where relics of Bonaparte were kept. Brook opened an old chest and reverently lifted from its depths a faded green uniform with gold epaulets. He laid it on a table which was said to have held the breakfasts of the exiled Emperor. Next he brought a pair of blue pantaloons

from the chest and then two red top-boots. All these he placed on the table, sighed and let his small hands flutter above the garments in mesmerismic rhythm.

"The Emperor was dressed in these things as he left Fontainebleau on the first leg of his journey to Elba. They say he was unshaven, uncombed that day, and that crumbs of snuff were on his lips and vest. It was in the square at Fontainebleau that I made my speech, Ellen. The same historic ground. I was not sensible of talking, yet I knew my lips were moving. I was so carried away with it all. I pictured the touching scene and I seemed to hear his dramatic farewell to the guards.... Ellen, do you know what day this is?"

"Was it April twentieth when Napoleon left Fontainebleau?"

"On this very same day he started for Elba."

"But he returned from Elba."

"Just as I shall return. At first I thought that my wife had brought me Waterloo. I can't tell you how sordid it was; how baffled I became. But I conquered my fear that it was Waterloo. I know it was Elba.... I shall come back from Elba."

Ellen Gage did not reply. He continued, his hand touching lightly the habiliments on the table, his fingers caressing the lacklustre top-boots. "The Emperor was haggard and bloated that day, as a handful of his guards drew up in the courtyard, forming a double-line. As he passed across the threshold, he raised a hand to his head and muttered: 'It's all like a dream.'... I sometimes feel that my past has been a dream."

"We shall bury ourselves in work and forget."

"Work? Yes. Yes. That is good. Sit down. I want to talk to you."

She sat in the easy chair where Napoleon had sat at St. Helena watching his three executors affix their seals and signatures to his will. Brook was distressed by occasional hiccoughs and she advised: "You shouldn't drink so much black coffee. You're not taking proper care of yourself."

He walked about the room, handling various relics, touching a small spur, opening a mahogany casket containing snuff-boxes, running his palm over a saddle, picking up the alarm-clock of Frederick II, which Napoleon had seized at Potsdam, and finally taking from the white-washed wall a Consular sword and its scabbard.

"I must wipe the picture from my mind, no matter what the cost. I cannot go on thinking of my wife. It makes the veins swell. I have difficulty sleeping. I think it is bile. The bile gets into my brain. I think I am toxic."

"You should watch yourself."

"I keep thinking of the Emperor constantly. Only five days from now is the anniversary of his entering the Royal Military School of Paris. That was in 1784 and he was fifteen. At fifteen I was a convict."

"You simply must forget all about it, Adam. You really weren't a convict at all. You know that."

"He was just my age when he put Josephine away. I should have taken counsel. I should have put away my Josephine. But she would have blackmailed me. What a

shock it was to come home that night. A prize fighter! My God. What do women want? In my boyhood I saw a woman who preferred a drunken, lewd farm-hand. I set the bees on him. God killed that prize fighter. I was saved a revenge. It is hard to say what one will do."

He sat on the edge of the Napoleonic bed and drew the Consular blade from its scabbard. He swished the air with the weapon. "Bourrienne overheard the agonized words of The Emperor as Junot and Napoleon walked near the wells of Messoudiah. There was something convulsive in The Emperor's features, a wildness in his look, says Bourrienne, and several times he struck his head. You'd be amazed how like that I acted when I saw the loathsome scene. The prize fighter, the woman who had betrayed me and that beast of a father! They are on a ship now, bound for Tahiti. She's going to marry Count Ranck. You've read all that in the papers. O, well. What if the ship were to sink? I should feel avenged. But no matter. When The Emperor heard of his wife's perfidy, he cried out: 'Woe to them!—I will exterminate the whole race of fops and puppies!' I suddenly felt like exterminating all prize fighters. We shall bring our full resources into play, Ellen. We shall press through bills in every state legislature, making prize fighting illegal. Do I dare confess to you what happened after that dog died?"

"I know what happened."

"What do you know?"

"You sent one of the blue anchor-pieces to the funeral. What was your reason?"

"How can I know? I was without reason. I moved as though robbed of sense and self-esteem. The florist was amazed. But he did as I asked. He put leaves of poison-oak among the blossoms. Sometimes I feel that I am half-mad."

"You must regain your old-time composure. Your recent work proves you are decidedly sane; you'll forget."

"Forget? Never! I didn't forget Big Peter. I didn't forget Cascaden. I kept the dirty clown out of service overseas. I have the memory of a Corsican. But now I am calming down. I've studied over, step by step, my whole career. I can't see a weak link in my chain of reasoning. I doubt if even Napoleon at Elba, and later at St. Helena, realized exactly why he failed in the Russian campaign or again at Leipzig. I dare say he was as puzzled in going over his career as I am in trying to analyze my own efforts, which to me seem sound even today."

"You don't infer that you have failed?"

He rested his chin on the sword-hilt. "Who shall say? It is obvious that I've never truly attained, either for myself or for those whom I have striven to help, the genuine achievements I have coveted. Philanthropies, public works, support of the arts, triumphs of business—all these I have launched and carried through. Still, I seem to have missed."

"You are tired and run-down."

"Napoleon thought that Waterloo was his best-planned battle. Yet, in spite of what seemed to him a perfect plan, the failure was complete. It is time for me to go back and analyze wherein my failure lay and to forestall, if possible, a Waterloo and a St. Helena."

"Nothing like that can happen if you stop fretting."

"One never knows. I would be stupid indeed to have studied the failures and successes of the great Napoleon and not profit by his triumphs and not read the true meaning of his debacle and apply it to myself."

"Don't even think of defeat."

"I am not speaking of defeats in business. Napoleon said that you cannot make an omelet without first breaking the eggs. It is life itself that makes me examine every detail of my career. I must not be defeated by life. The rest doesn't matter."

"You are in the prime of life, Adam."

"Perhaps, but Napoleon was only four years older than I when he came to Waterloo. I am not thinking of money, now. We stand to lose millions in the oil leases, but I can bear that. Somehow, since my wife's barbaric behavior, I have lost my taste for money and for public acclaim. It's just an empty show. I still find myself unable to stay away from business battles; I still desire victories—but the money side of it does not enter. I would like to do something, whatever it may be, to vindicate myself to *myself*."

"I knew you were terribly hurt by the divorce, but not until now have I realized just how terrible it was."

He jabbed the floor with the sword-point. "Ellen, I have made up my mind. I am going to make the boldest move of my career and without the slightest regard for personal gain. It must be done with unusual secrecy. I suddenly conceived the idea while dictating that grain letter to the President. God knows he has his troubles, too.

What a price one must pay for being exalted by the people!"

He half closed his eyes and seemed to be searching himself inside. "In all I have done, Ellen, I've really never accomplished anything definite for the farmer."

"No man living has contributed more during drought and flood."

"That's nothing. I've given money to lots of things. But I had lots of money. It meant no sacrifice at all. The soil is in me, Ellen, deep inside me. I realize it more and more. And now the Government calls us as though it were a war. We must act and we must act without selfishness."

"Adam, I haven't any idea what your plan is, but I feel strangely that you are getting a better perspective than you ever have had."

"The Government is coming to the aid of the wheat market. Only a few of us know the extent of the disaster that threatens. The Government is going into the Chicago market with more than fifty millions of dollars. That should keep the price up until the first of June. Now here is my plan: Secretly and anonymously, I shall go into the market and buy the July option, which will stabilize the price until the first of August, when the crisis should be passed. Is it not a real service to our country?"

"I am thinking of the danger of such a plan."

"I am going to do it. We shall buy at twenty-five per cent margin."

"It's a tremendous risk."

"Then you are not with me in this?"

"I am with you in everything. Remember that always."

But if you go in now and the market should fall to 80, you would stand to lose millions—yes, more than forty millions. You know that, of course.”

“We shall buy through a dozen brokers. I must do it.”

Chapter Two

buying stopped and the Government's emergency support was done, Adam Brook stepped in with all his resources. It looked for a time that the crisis would be passed. Then suddenly the wheat market began to sink like a kite in the rain. The Little Napoleon brought all his genius to bear on the situation, one man fighting a world of monsters. He stayed day and night at his offices, eating and sleeping there. He seldom shaved during the days that followed. He alternated between fits of depression and chaotic, strenuous moods.

Usually neat in dress and cleanly to a fault, he now didn't bother to undress at all, but lay in his clothes on the iron bed of the Napoleonic ante-chamber. Daily he became more shabby and irascible.

He worked his corps unmercifully, but he spared himself least of all. Occasionally he was quiet and kind, but again, and without warning, he would begin cursing and issuing orders, only to countermand the orders and contradict his own rules of procedure. Still, through the early hours of battle and into the week when the world of wheat collapsed, men long associated with Brook cheered

each new evidence of his amazing powers of concentration, his compelling grasp of detail and his adding-machine mind that clicked off statistics, totals and percentages. These men hoped, shivered, waited and prayed for a miracle.

Brook was a despot, a driver, but the magic of his leadership was such that his lieutenants worked themselves to the marrow. Sometimes they grew tired of the fight and hungered for tranquillity, but he always appeared when the morale was lowest and inspired them with courage that endowed him in their minds with super-human powers. Not one of them had ever entered an intimate friendship with him. He was in effect a stranger to them always, yet he was their leader and he had led them wheresoever he willed.

When the earth rocked because of man's most elemental need—bread—Adam Brook carried his standards with mad bravery. No longer was it a secret what he had done, and although he had for once craved no personal publicity, he was getting it. Even his powerful enemies, and they were not few, marveled at the spectacle of this lone man preparing to die at a last ditch. There was something at once magnificent and pitiful in the spectacle. But he was indifferent, either to criticism or praise.

Alone in his Napoleonic room, he chewed his nails, drank black coffee until hiccoughs racked his frame, and compared his state with the nine weeks in which Napoleon was pushed back so slowly but surely from the Rhine to Paris. He lost thirty of his one hundred and forty-five pounds. The little melon that had grown beneath his waist-

coat vanished, leaving his trousers-band loose and giving his unpressed clothes the appearance of having belonged to a comedian in a burlesque show. The rosy color left his cheeks and he noted this as he saw himself in the tall Napoleonic mirror, framed in gilt and embossed with large "N" initials and symbolic bees.

He would rouse from confusing meditations, leap through the door leading to his office, pore over ticker-tape and fling himself on columns of figures as though they were columns of enemy infantry converging on him. Again, even while drops of sweat still were trickling from his forehead, he would become cool and unshaken as the small but powerful hammers of the ticker pounded away his millions.

The pyramid of his megalomania had been so long in the building that he found it difficult to tear it down all at once. He caught himself lying to himself. He said he would cut short his wheat operations, take the money and buy meal-tickets with it and distribute the tickets to the poor of the city. But he knew he wouldn't quit and it made him furious when he told himself a lie. There had been too many lies and pretences. He would run back to his sound-proof Napoleonic room after each self-told lie, slam the door, fall on the iron bed, bite the linen that once had covered the pain-tossed body of the Corsican, and scream accusations against himself and his destiny.

He resented advice of his cabinet members as though they were flinging insults at him. When it was proposed that he close out his holdings in wheat and rescue a part of his crumbling fortune, he yelled: "Cowards!"

"I've lost money, but I haven't lost confidence in my own soundness of reasoning and my capacity to come back," he screamed. "To the wise man every defeat is a lesson in success."

This and other platitudes were hurled at Ellen and at Pierpont Jones and at Judge Webb.

He discharged employes, only to hire them back the next hour. He asked for Judge Webb's resignation when the counsellor, desperate, had said: "I'm tired of hearing about the poor God damned farmer. The only thing for the farmer to do is to quit farming and get a job. I'm sicker of the farmer's troubles than he is himself. Damn it, Adam, get out of this and let's pay attention to the oil-leases."

Adam apologized and re-engaged the Judge. The lawyer understood his client's strain; marveled at his strange courage, his madness in carrying on the battle.

Noble J. Nimms, the public relations counsel, sought to get his chief's mind off the terrific crisis. He said to Brook: "This is Raconteur's birthday, A.B. Shall I order publicity?"

Mr. Nimms was not prepared for the scream as Brook leaped up: "No. Take the son of a bitch out and have him shot!"

He retired swiftly, leaving Brook sitting there with one hand buried to the wrist in the coffee-stained waistcoat. Nimms looked back as he got to the door and was amazed to see A.B. plunging once again into a labyrinth of work, as though nothing had been said, and rallying every atom of his genius in studying reports from Chicago.

Hour after hour he worked, retired to his room to scream, came out again to give new orders, drank black coffee by the pint, astounded everyone with his sleepless energy, cast up towers of figures and looked with blood-shot eyes at the harbor far below his fortieth-floor battleground.

The lieutenants were so bedraggled that they ceased wondering at his weird interruptions. Once he asked Ellen if she had sent a floral anchor to State Senator McGuffy's funeral.

"Why, Adam, he's not dead!"

He gazed at her absently. "Well, he ought to be. He's been at Brook Medical Center for ten days. Damn it! The only efficiency I ever saw there was in the morgue, where they carry out the wicker-baskets full of patients."

On the day the wheat market opened at 82, Brook glared at Ellen and at Jones, although they had said not a word.

"Damn you, we are not going to surrender!"

They didn't reply. He went on. "We are out nearly fifty millions now. What have we left that we can realize on?"

"We have liquidated Brook Utilities," Ellen said quietly. "The controlling interest, as you know, was sold a month ago."

"How much is left?"

"Yesterday we sold the rest—all but one qualifying share."

"What's it worth?"

"It opened at eighty-two this morning."

"What a coincidence. The same as wheat. Imagine! Down from 220 to 82. Never mind. I intend to remain until the last ditch. Napoleon at Marengo faced what seemed decisive defeat at 7 o'clock. By midnight it was turned into a decisive victory. If I fail, it must not be because I've left a single resource untouched. God knows I don't like to fail, but I must not go to defeat with the idea in mind that I didn't risk 100 per cent of everything. It would haunt me worse than...worse than...well, what the hell?"

Ellen braved a probable reprimand. "Won't you pull out before it is too late?"

He began to rave. "Who could have foreseen that the efforts of the Government to hold up the price of wheat would result in the farmers planting increased acreage, when the advice of every agency was for them to cut their acreage? Who was to foresee a world-surplus of wheat, further breaking the price for the farmer? And most of all, how could anyone have foreseen that Russia would dump wheat on the export market, at a loss to themselves and at the very time her own people were threatened by famine?"

They didn't interrupt him. He went on: "Why, it was as impossible to foresee that as it was for Napoleon to know that his Russian campaign would be blasted by the burning of Moscow. God! There's a coincidence too unmistakable to wave aside. The burning of Moscow! The dumping of Russian wheat! Get me more money, Jones. We must have ammunition. Get it! Get millions. I'll not be whipped."

Jones gazed blankly. "And just where will I get it, A.B.?"

"Bond issues. Raise second bond issues on my real estate holdings."

"We can't even meet the interest and installments of the bond issue on the building we are sitting in, A.B., and it's due next month."

"What about *Brook Towers*?"

"Judge for yourself. The old bonds are selling at 60, although you floated them at 102. With today's conditions in the Street, we can do nothing."

Brook leered and his unshaven lips twitched. "Who says we can do nothing? You think they can beat me? Do you think I'll fail? Hand me that telephone. I'll get money. I'll get it abroad. I'll call London, Paris, Berlin!"

He shouted to the switchboard operators to put in trans-oceanic calls to all three cities. He mumbled. "Can't do anything! My God! I must stand on every rampart. I must fire every piece. I must do everything. By God! How are our bank balances?"

"You must know the facts, Adam. You know it's no use appealing to London banks. We disposed of \$5,000,000 in securities there when wheat sank to 90."

"Yes. Yes. That's true. But I'll call London anyway. I'll fight Russia itself if I have to. Damn it! I'll start a war."

Jones and Ellen looked at each other meaningly when he suddenly forgot about telephoning London. "My philanthropic work is going to the dogs, Ellen, I want you immediately to subscribe half a million dollars to a fund for

taking care of unemployed persons. And I want you to have a meeting called of the vestry of St. Sebastian's. We need many improvements. I'll give all the money needed...."

"Why don't you lie down and rest for a while? We'll carry on."

He mumbled: "We cannot make peace without honor. We do not want to go marching into space. France must give us gold. They should have sent me to Europe with Owen D. Young. But nobody would listen to me."

He crumpled forward, his head falling to the desk. When Ellen, Jones and two other lieutenants sought to lift him and carry him to the iron cot, he roused and began upbraiding them. "I caught you, didn't I? Damn it! Why can't I relax a moment without having a lot of quitters presume that I am quitting? Get me that London connection. You don't know, I suppose, that Napoleon slept at times during Waterloo. He sat through eight eventful hours, his table in the open air, and a bundle of straw beneath his feet. The ground was wet. His artillery was axle-deep in the mud. Get me that London connection!"

"You've got to call a halt or you will crack," Judge Webb said. "Damn it, I'll not be a party to seeing you murder yourself."

"There are two million farmers to be helped."

"And I say to hell with them again," Judge Webb said.

"I want you to make out my will, Judge."

"Don't talk nonsense. Your will is made. You're not dying."

"No. Not dying. But I want to make a new will."

"To hell with it, A.B. You've got to have sleep. Nobody can stay awake three nights in succession and bear up."

"Send for some more coffee. My place is with my army. And here I stay."

He refused assistance and went again to his teakwood desk. He brought some keys from his pocket and had difficulty in opening one of the drawers. Finally he brought out a black, metal box. Then he opened the box.

"Here, Ellen. Here, my faithful friend. I have two things for you. One is a decoration for valor in the field."

He lifted a cameo brooch from the black metal box. He stood up unsteadily and pinned it to her dress, above her heart. She felt his fingers tremble against her bosom. "This brooch belonged to Letizia Ramolini, the mother of Napoleon."

"I thank you so much, Adam. I know what it means to you."

He again reached into the box and produced a document. "This will be a surprise to you. A pleasant surprise, I hope. Take it. It is a deed I made out four years ago in memory of a man I shoved aside so ruthlessly. In memory of your father, Ellen. He was a good man. And you left him for me. Another woman had a father, a bad man, and she left me for him."

"Steady, Adam," she whispered in his ear. Then she

examined the document. It was a deed for Brook's model farm, *Brookfield*, in Illinois. "I can't accept this, Adam, especially at such a time."

"You must accept. I owe it to you. It's a debt. I must pay all my just debts."

"You owe me nothing."

"I owe you everything. I now know that."

Brook turned to Webb. "I wish I were going with her to manage the farm. I am a great farmer, Webb. I learned most of my farming while I was in prison, Judge."

The Judge's eyes bugged out. He thought Adam out of his mind. Ellen grasped Adam's arm. "For God's sake don't!"

"Don't, hell! I was a convict, Judge. Tell it to the world. A convict! Who cares now? I don't. A great convict, too, and a great farmer."

"I'm going to get an ambulance and force you into it," Judge Webb said.

"No," Ellen said, "Adam is going with me. I am going to accept his gift and he is going to accept mine."

He looked at her strangely. "And what is the gift, Ellen?"

"I'll tell you some other time."

"I'll win the battle."

Jones interrupted: "It's a panic, A.B. The wheat market is completely on its back. Nothing can stave it off. Not even a hundred more millions."

Brook straightened. "Then I'll go down with it. I'll ask no quarter."

Jones said: "No. You've got your debts to pay. You never have shirked payment of honest debts."

"I am a man of honor," Brook said. "And as a man of honor, I go down with my flags flying. We shall stay until all is lost."

"Nevertheless, A.B., I have closed you out at seventy, and when all your obligations are met, you will have a cash balance of . . . well, I haven't cast up the totals yet."

Brook took a sheaf of papers from Jones' hand. "I consider this a treacherous move, Jones. You have betrayed me."

There were tears in Jones' eyes. "I did what was right."

"Are these the figures?"

"I'll have them totaled for you on the machine."

Brook laughed harshly. "The machine! To hell with the machine!" His black eyes opened widely and he looked without blinking down row after row of figures. In almost no time he had added them, showing a fierce, gloating relish in his ability to compute.

"Gentlemen," he said, "Adam Brook has a balance of exactly \$6,275.22."

Suddenly he burst out: "I'll not quit! Jones! Countermand your orders. I shall come back. I fight best with my back to the wall."

Jones spoke sympathetically. "Too late, A.B. The market has closed in delirium. God knows you fight splendidly when your back is to the wall, but there's no wall left. We're through."

Brook sat down, his shoulders sagging and his head bowed. "It doesn't seem possible." It was as though he had

been rolling golden dice and suddenly an intruder had snatched up the dice and run off with them. One by one his lieutenants stepped up to say goodbye. He had never been one to encourage sentimentality, but as they shook his moist, tired hand, they were choked and sad.

Judge Webb was the last to go, leaving Ellen and Adam alone in the paper-littered, smoke-filled office.

"I'm saying goodbye, A.B. I never knew I could love another man so much. I'll be waiting to take up the cudgels when you have had a long rest."

"It doesn't seem possible," Brook said. "Why, only yesterday..."

The Judge had gone and Adam didn't stir until he heard Ellen's voice. "I'm taking you west with me," she said. "I want to be with you always. I want to be your wife, Adam."

He didn't seem to be listening. His hand was clutching the iron apple that for so long had been on the wide, almost bare teakwood desk. He held it tightly for some moments, then, without warning, he went to the death mask that was hung on the blue-velveted wall. He raised the iron apple. He snarled and began smashing the mask. He worked with the fury of an assassin.

Ellen did not attempt to interfere. She waited until he had broken the mask and until he had leaned over the fragments, using the apple as a pestle and grinding the pieces into powder. Then he rose, his hands white with the powder and his clothing splotted with white. Then he seemed to grow calm again. Ellen went for his hat and overcoat.

On their way to the private elevator, he said: "He did not come back from St. Helena."

"He would have if there had been a woman that loved him."

"It will be good to feel the earth again," he said.

As he sat in his limousine, he seemed very worn and tired. He put his head on Ellen's shoulder and slept. There was a strange, peaceful smile on his lips.

The nuptial flight was done.

Of a June Sunday the fevered breath of summer persists beneath the high stone cornices of downtown Manhattan. The great bronze doors, so tightly sealed, shimmer like the lids of kettles, and the deserted windows seem to have been struck blind from staring so long at the sun. Bells again belabor the sleep-locked head of Wall Street; drab pigeons once more pout against the nudes of the Stock Exchange frieze.

But Adam Brook is not there, whether it be a hot Sunday in June or a cold January's holy day.

He walks among the bee-colonies, content, wise in the love of his wife, Ellen, and of their adopted son. He takes the lad's hand and they listen together as though the June earth were singing to them a sweet and tender song of faith. The gentle hymning of the June earth makes one forget bells of noisy piety that stuff the frontal sinus with messages of Nearer My God to Thee.

How satisfying to hold a hand no larger than a plum and to repeat such rhymes as "A swarm of bees in May

is worth a load of hay. A swarm of bees in June is worth a silver spoon...."

"You shouldn't fear bees, son. They really are sociable little fellows...."

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